

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



March 2018

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THE ROAD TO WISDOM

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON

The Genius of Sri Krishna II

Whence comes all this bondage of action—because we chain the soul with action. There are two existences: nature on the one side and the Self on the other. By the word nature is meant not only all this external world, but also our bodies, the mind, the will, “I”. Beyond all that is the infinite light of the soul. There never was a time when the spirit could be identified even with the mind. It is self-evident that the food you eat is manufacturing the mind all the time. It is matter. The Self is above any connection with food. It is infinite light. Its light is the same always. If you put a blue or a green glass [before a light], what has that to do with the light? Its colour is unchangeable. It is the mind which changes and gives the different colours. The moment the spirit leaves the body, the whole thing goes to pieces. The reality in nature is spirit. Reality itself—the light of the spirit—moves and speaks and does everything [through our bodies, minds, etc]. It is the energy and soul and life of the spirit that is being worked upon in different ways by matter. The spirit is the cause of all our thoughts and body-action and everything, but it is untouched by good or evil, pleasure or pain, heat or cold, and all the dualism of nature, although it lends its light to everything. ‘Therefore all these actions are in nature. Nature is working out her own laws in our bodies and minds. We identify ourselves with nature and



say, “I am doing this.” This way delusion seizes us.’ We always act under some compulsion. When hunger compels me, I eat. That real “I” is eternally free. What can compel it to do anything. The sufferer is in nature. It is only when we identify ourselves with the body that we say, ‘I am suffering; I am Mr. So-and-so—all such nonsense. The vast majority of mankind are under this delusion; and whenever they do any good, they feel that they are the [doers]. They are not yet able to understand higher philosophy. Do not disturb their faith! They are shunning evil and doing good. They are workers for good. By degrees they will think that there is greater glory than that of doing good. They will only witness, and things are done. Gradually they will understand. When they have shunned all evil and done all good, then they will begin to realize that they are beyond all nature. They are not the doers. They are the witness. They simply stand and look. Nature is begetting all the universe.

From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*,
(Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2016), 1.457-58.



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Contents

Traditional Wisdom	343
This Month	344
<i>Editorial: Customised Vedanta?</i>	345
Understanding Mysticism through Quantum Physics <i>Gopal C Bhar</i>	347
Swami Vivekananda and Others on the Impact of <i>Nirguna</i> Brahman on the Phenomenal World <i>Gopal Stavig</i>	366
Balabodha: Mantra	380
Traditional Tales: Eight Days	381
Reviews	383
Manana	385
Reports	387

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On 27 April 1901, by the invitation of Sir Henry Cotton, Chief Commissioner of Assam, Swami Vivekananda delivered his last public lecture at Quinton Hall, Shillong. Ninety-two years later, in 1993, this sacred land where the Quinton Hall stood came to the Ramakrishna Mission. To serve the youth of Northeast India, the Mission thereafter constructed the Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Cultural Centre.



Presently the Cultural Centre empowers local youths by providing innovative technical training in computer software and hardware, classes on developing effective communication skills in the English, Hindi, and Khasi languages, and moral value education classes. The technical computer training is helping many students to find suitable employment. Every year more than 5,500 students receive training in computer software and hardware. In addition, local children receive classes promoting Indian culture and values, as well as developing artistic skills.



For the last 15 years the centre has trained more than 40,000 youths. Increasing demand for our training has compelled us to expand our facilities—hence the construction of a new building (G+3) on the same land was initiated with the assistance of the State and Central Government.

As the building nears its completion, a large-scale ceremony will be held on 27 April 2018. To commemorate this auspicious event, a Souvenir shall be printed and distributed, which will include reminiscences from senior monks, devotees, and well wishers. We humbly request your financial seva for the following:

1. Production of a Commemorative Souvenir – 17 lakhs
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May Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Ma and Swami Vivekananda bless each one of you for your kind and generous support.

Yours in the Lord,
Swami Sarvabhutananda
Secretary



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Maitrayaniya Upanishad

March 2018
Vol. 123, No. 3

मैत्रायणीयोपनिषत्

अथान्यत्राप्युक्तं सर्वाणि ह वा इमानि भूतान्यहरहः प्रपतन्त्यन्नमभिजिघृक्षमाणानि सूर्यो
रश्मिभिराददात्यन्नं तेनासौ तपत्यन्नेनाभिषिक्ताः पचन्तीमे प्राणा अग्निर्वा अन्नेनोज्ज्वलत्यन्नकामेनेदं
प्रकल्पितं ब्रह्मण । अतोऽन्नमात्मेत्युपासीतेत्येवं ह्याह । अन्नाद्भूतानि जायन्ते जातान्यन्नेन वर्धन्ते
अद्यतेऽस्ति च भूतानि तस्मादन्नं तदुच्यते ।

॥६.१२॥

*Athanyatrapy-uktam sarvani ha va imani bhutany-ahar-abah prapatanty-annam-
abhijigbrikshamanani suryo rashmibhir-adadaty-annam tenasau tapaty-annabhishikta
pachantime prana agnir va annenaj-jvalaty-annakamenedam prakalpitam brahmana.
Ato'nnam-atmety-upasitetyevam hy-aha. Annad-bhutani jayante jatany-annena vardhante
adyate'tti cha bhutani tasmad annam tad uchyate.* (6.12)

And thus it has been said elsewhere: Indeed all creatures here run about day after day, desiring to get food. The sun takes food to himself by his rays and thereby he gives forth heat. When supplied with food living beings here digest. Indeed, fire blazes up by food. This world was created by Brahma with a desire for food. Therefore, let a person reverence food as the self. For thus has it been said: 'From food creatures are born, by food they grow when born, because it is eaten by and eats creatures, it is called food' [*Taittiriya Upanishad*, 2.1.2]. (6.12)

THIS MONTH

CAN VEDANTA BE CUSTOMISED to suit the needs of the followers? If yes, what can be modified and what cannot be altered? These issues are discussed in **Customised Vedanta?**

Mysticism is an innate human capacity that manifests based on one's inner spiritual growth. It is the experience of eternal Self within, conditioned by our dimensionally-limited mind, intelligence, and egoism. Psychology, being the science of mind, comes closer to mysticism than physics, which is closer to biology. Two persons' mystical experiences cannot be identical. Swami Vivekananda said that religion is the only science taught as a science of experience. The book from which this is learned is one's own mind and heart. This is the real science of religion. But the mind is not an independent entity. Our body is the slave of our mind. The body and the mind, the controller of sense organs, together are tied to the law of causality, which in nature dictates with certainty. This mind, commonly identified as the ego, holds us captive in this world where time, space, and causation rule, thus depriving us of freedom. Vedanta is a mighty investigation, a grand exploration into one's own inner world of the Self. It is a scientific quest into the basis and nature of our daily experience, and from an analysis of our daily perceptions, we come upon the profound truth of our life and existence. The supreme goal of human life according to Vedanta is to free this mind from the clutches of nature in the form of space, time, and causality, and is commonly

termed as moksha, meaning freedom. Gopal Chandra Bhar, honorary professor of physics at the Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute discusses these and allied topics in **Understanding Mysticism through Quantum Physics.**

One of the most important aspects of Swamiji's interpretation of Advaita Vedanta is his emphasis on the influence of *nirguna* Brahman on phenomenal existence. There are a number of reasons for realising that *nirguna* Brahman is not 'wholly other' or 'totally other' from a finite existence. Gopal Stavig, a researcher from Hollywood, elaborates this concept in **Swami Vivekananda and Others on the Impact of Nirguna Brahman-Atman on the Phenomenal World.**

Many wonderful nuggets of wisdom contained in ancient scriptures are difficult to understand. In *Balabodha*, such ancient wisdom is made easy. This month's topic is **Mantra**. Understanding this word is necessary to understand the various traditions that follow it.

What is the secret of peace and happiness in life? We get an answer in the story **Eight Days**. This story is this month's *Traditional Tales* and has been translated from the Tamil book *Arulneri Kathaigal*.

Raymond Geuss, professor emeritus of philosophy at the University of Cambridge has written the book **A World Without Why**, where he shows how the optimistic assumption that the world would make sense one day might be misguided. From this book, we bring you this month's *Manana*.

Customised Vedanta?

WHAT IS VEDANTA? This question can be answered in two ways. One is by mentioning the word-meaning of 'Vedanta', and that would be 'the end of Vedas' or 'the gist or summary of the Vedas'. This is the meaning of the term 'Vedanta'. The teachings of Vedanta are contained mostly in the Upanishads, which are, mostly found towards the later or end part of the Vedas. That is a more scholarly way of defining it. But is that the definition or meaning that a common person observes in society or in people who profess to practise or preach Vedanta?

There is another, more observable a method of defining Vedanta. That is probably how ordinary people understand it. This way of defining is to see, observe, and understand the speech, beliefs, and behaviour of those who claim to understand or practise Vedanta. It is just as a person would have to observe a doctor, to know what a doctor does and from that infer the nature of the practice of medicine or the greater field of medicine. Similarly, to understand Vedanta, an ordinary person sees the activities of a follower of Vedanta. This definition has an inherent flaw, and that arises from the fact that usually there are huge gaps between the theory and the practice of any discipline, much so when it is a spiritual discipline, as it is highly difficult to grasp spiritual truths. Still, it is the nature of the practice of something that creates an impression on people's minds, and it is mostly in that manner that they understand that particular thing. So, then comes the question, how is Vedanta

practised in general or how do people claiming to practise it behave?

Vedanta practitioners are of two broad cat-

**The medium can be changed, not the message.
The body can be changed, not the spirit.**

egories: monastic or dedicated and non-monastic. Some people believe that monasticism is integral to Vedanta though that is far from the truth. These followers of Vedanta might belong to various schools and have different rituals, sacred books, temples, doctrines, or ways of spiritual practice. However, all followers of Vedanta are unanimous about three things: the acceptance of a supreme divine principle, the impermanence of this universe, and the importance of moral and ethical values. If probed further, all followers of Vedanta would agree that one common thread of divinity permeates all beings, though they might differ on the exact details of the nature of that divinity. This should be then the sum of Vedanta as perceived by the ordinary person.

Unfortunately, that is seldom how Vedanta is popularly perceived. Followers of Vedanta are popularly seen as some people who wear a particular kind of costume or at least decorate their body with different marks, perform some prayers and rituals, follow dietary restrictions of various kinds, chant mantras, sing devotional songs, read books in Sanskrit, and generally relate to an ancient Indian tradition. And it is here that the problem of customisation of Vedanta comes into the picture.

Many teachers and also many practitioners of Vedanta believe that Vedanta needs to be modified to suit the needs and context of the person to whom it is being taught. This raises many points of concern. Is Vedanta something that can be modified to suit the needs of anyone? If one modifies this philosophy according to one's understanding, eventually will it retain its true original form? What can be changed in Vedanta? The emphatic answer to the first question is no, Vedanta cannot be changed. How it is preached—the language, medium, and style—can be and should be changed to suit the audience.

Before we proceed any further, we need to understand certain things about the propagation or teaching of any philosophy. It is the medium that can be changed, not the message. It is the body that can be changed, not the spirit. Some self-styled followers of Vedanta find it fashionable nowadays to say that one can live as one pleases and still practise Vedanta. This cannot be because the practice of any form of Vedanta requires one to be established on the bedrock of ethics and morality. But, this is what is compromised when one says that one can live as one pleases and still practise Vedanta. This is told on the pretext that the ancient philosophy of Vedanta should be modified to suit the present-day needs. And often, Swami Vivekananda is quoted to justify this kind of approach. Swamiji never wanted the tenets of Vedanta to be modified or diluted. He was a strong advocate of following the Upanishadic dicta. All he wanted was to set up a mechanism that would disseminate these abstruse philosophical concepts to everyone, in a language even a toddler can understand. It is unfortunate that some have misinterpreted this lofty message of Swamiji.

For instance, truthfulness is a discipline that all followers of Vedanta have to follow, and one

cannot attain the ultimate realisation that different schools of Vedanta promise if one is not truthful. Similarly, one cannot attain the goal of Vedanta if one is engrossed in bodily pleasures.

Does it mean that Vedanta has to be practised in the same manner as the ancient rishis did? The reader should not mistake this discussion to be a call to obstinately hold on to age-old customs and rituals that have nothing to do with the values and teachings of Vedanta. The lesson is that one should stick to the essence—particularly a strong ethical and moral practice, a belief in the impermanence of this universe, and the acknowledgement of an underlying divinity in all beings—but one can change the external forms and media to suit the needs of the time and place. One should, of course, make use of technology and the Internet. One should use all other aids that the modern civilisation provides us, but one should not lose sight of the core of Vedanta.

The problem in understanding when and what can be modified in Vedanta is better solved when one is focussed on having Vedanta as a personal, subjective, private experience. The true aim of Vedanta is to make one understand that the individual self and the ultimate Self or Brahman are identical. If this is considered to be the life-mission by a follower of Vedanta, then such a person would have no trouble in seeing what is essential and what has to be practised.

Change in religion is essentially a change in its form. The cardinal values of religion are the same since the birth of humanity. The forms in which these values are practised and also the method in which they are preached are all that keep changing. Innovations in religious traditions should focus more on the comprehension of the values of a particular faith tradition. Forms are secondary and many times irrelevant. The secret of the fulfilment of spiritual life lies within the aspirant and not without.



Understanding Mysticism through Quantum Physics

Gopal C Bhar

MYSTICISM IS AN INNATE human capacity that manifests based on one's inner spiritual growth. It is not describable in terms of intellectual knowledge. It is the experience of eternal Self within, conditioned by our dimensionally-limited mind, intelligence, and egoism. Psychology, being the science of mind, comes closer to mysticism than physics, which is closer to biology. Two persons' mystical experiences cannot be identical. Swami Vivekananda said that religion is the only science taught as a science of experience, which is termed as 'mysticism'.¹ The book from which this is learned is one's own mind and heart. This is the real science of religion. But the mind is not an independent entity. Our body is the slave of our mind. The body and the mind, the controller of sense organs, together are tied to the law of causality, which in nature dictates with certainty. This mind, commonly identified as the ego, holds us captive in this world where time, space, and causation rule, thus depriving us of freedom.

Vedanta is a mighty investigation, a grand exploration into one's own inner world of the Self. It is a scientific quest into the basis and nature of our daily experience, and from an analysis of our daily perceptions, we come upon the profound truth of our life and existence. The supreme goal of human life according to Vedanta is to free this mind from the clutches of nature in the form of space, time, and causality, and is

commonly termed as moksha, meaning freedom. In the words of Aldous Huxley in *The Perennial Philosophy*, 'Man's life on earth has only one end and purpose: to identify himself with his eternal Self and so to come to unitive knowledge of the Divine Ground'.² A gross illustration of moksha is the escape velocity of an object from earth, whereby the object is freed from earth's gravitational pull for no-return. This occurs when the kinetic energy of the object—which is equal to half of its mass times square of the velocity—overcomes the earth's gravitational pull. Similarly, the mind, when it is voluntarily freed from that thralldom to the sensory system becomes purified, and this higher mind goes beyond the grip of space, time, and causality. So, by denying the senses one can enjoy the spiritual freedom.

Mystics seek the realisation of ultimate Reality or Atman, which comes after one has dispensed with all the enjoyments of the world of senses. Atman is inaccessible by the senses and the ordinary or lower mind, but can be known and realised by a pure mind cleared of all its attachments, both external and internal. Mystics are spiritual geniuses grounded in solid experience and intense self-sacrifice associated with moral greatness and physiological transformation. Intellectually-rich scientists might also have a solid experience of their disciplines but may not necessarily be established in the other two qualities. Though great scientists like Archimedes, Newton, and Einstein are often cited

as examples because of their so called 'mystical' experiences in the course of their discoveries, no such evidence is found for their being established in the latter two characteristics.

The strength of science is its objective experimental verification. But mysticism is a subjective realisation of the Truth underlying macrocosmic and microcosmic universe. The common ground between Eastern mystical insight and modern physics is the fact that in the former, one experiences through the investigation of the inner world, while in the latter, one experiences the outer world through objective investigation. However, our life is an indivisible whole comprised of both the inner and the outer worlds. One cannot live in parts and it is the incongruity of our inner life with outer worldly life that is the root cause of all our miseries. All our worldly actions are reflections of our inner self, therefore frequent synchronisation is necessary for harmonious living. Only a few great souls' inner world is near to the ideal, or *ritam*, the Truth. Most people's inner world is full of lofty desires and aspirations which often rush out through all that they think, speak, do, or do not do. Whatever we are in our inner world is expressed, voluntarily or involuntarily, in our external activities. Sri Ramakrishna said: 'If one eats radish, one belches radish.'³ Thus, the inner and outer, together form our overall self.

Many discoveries in modern science, especially in the quantum physics, have broadened the scientific horizon and as a result many scientists now believe that the objective method and subjective mind are interrelated, intertwined, and inseparable. Erwin Schrödinger, one of the pioneers of quantum physics, proposed in his book *What is Life?* that, contrary to the beliefs of classical physics, our life is different from the inanimate world, inhabiting a borderland between the quantum and classical worlds.⁴ Heisenberg's

Uncertainty Principle, being the base of quantum physics, is the prime ground leading to physicists' incorporation of the role of mind in objective investigation. We cannot restrain ourselves from unpleasant and undesirable affairs in life, though neurologists say the mind is colourless as it is independent of *motor control* or *neural potentials* unlike the brain.⁵ Not sure what point he is making with this statement? Or how it relates to the cited source? 'Our perception of the world is relative to our neurological structure and the ways in which social conditioning has taught us to see,' said Alan Watts.⁶ In other words, the mind is conditioned by our prejudice arising from past experiences. By detaching one's mind from this prejudice one can realise freedom. In the Bhagavadgita, the attainment at this state is termed as *sthitha-prajna*, meaning steady wisdom, breaking off all ties that bind one to this world.⁷

Physics deals with the phenomenal world of matter. The phenomenal world is studied using the principle of reductionism, whereby a complex system is analysed in terms of its component parts. But in quantum physics, in contrast to common belief, the holistic or macroscopic behaviour of the object is *not* determined by the microscopic behaviour of its constituent parts. The macroscopic universe seems to behave very differently than the microscopic. Thus, experimental discoveries made in the field of modern physics that could not be explained by classical physics, if taken seriously, require a paradigmatic change in our understanding of our relation to the phenomenal world. Quantum physics involves a conceptual departure from the reductionist view. The foundation of scientific knowledge has not only shifted, it has shattered! This is not an evolution in science, but a revolution, as Thomas Kuhn observed in 1962.⁸ A prior paradigm-shift moved scientific theory from the

Ptolemaic system—the earth is at the centre of the universe—to the Copernican system—the sun is at the centre of the universe; the new shift is now moving from Newtonian physics to relativity and quantum physics.

There is a deep discrepancy between how we perceive the world and the way things really are. Scientists do not deal with Truth, but with limited and approximate descriptions of what is seen. Swamiji said: ‘Man is not travelling from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lower to higher truth.’⁹ While quantum physics, being one of the highest developments in modern science, is not explicitly similar to mysticism or spirituality, they share some common philosophical ground; both are concerned with subtle areas inaccessible to our senses.

Quantum physics incorporates three major characteristics: The subjectivity concept of Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle that denies the possibility of the objective study of reality; interconnectedness, where the part is determined by the whole, not the other way around; and a holistic and implicate order.

These latter two are also views shared by Eastern philosophy, where the world is understood to be ‘organic’ and all parts are interconnected and interrelated manifestations of the same fundamental reality. This is in sharp contrast to Western philosophy in which the world is perceived as a multitude of separate objects and events. The broad area of agreement between the Eastern mystical insight and the revolutionary vision of the universe postulated in modern physics is the monistic view of the world, and this becomes increasingly evident at the subatomic level where all the phenomena are interrelated and cannot be viewed as autonomous and isolated things or processes. Relativity theory, on the other hand, affirms that scientific knowledge based on sense perception is only

relative. Quantum physics asserts that individual parts are connected to each other in a whole. Vedanta is a third force, it is neither reductionist nor holistic where the whole is not the sum of its component parts. Quantum physics only says parts are subtly interrelated.

Brian David Josephson, a physics Nobel laureate, comments: ‘[Rabindranath] Tagore is, I think, saying that truth is a subtler concept than Einstein realises.’¹⁰ Swamiji said: ‘Any work, any action, any thought that produces an effect is called a Karma. Thus the law of Karma means the law of causation, of inevitable cause and sequence. Wheresoever there is a cause, there an effect must be produced; this necessity cannot be resisted, and ... is true throughout the whole universe. Whatever we see, or feel, or do, whatever action there is anywhere in the universe, while being the effect of past work on the one hand, becomes, on the other, a cause in its turn,

Brian David Josephson (b. 1940)



and produces its own effect.¹¹ It involves three stages: objective, subjective, and finally oneness, or complete interconnectedness.

This eventually expands our individuality and makes it broad and liberal, and the effect of causality is minimised while one approaches Oneness. Oneness is the most fundamental principle—Oneness at the physical, mental, and spiritual levels. The more the individuality, the stronger is the binding of causality. The God of Vedanta is the Absolute beyond relativity, beyond space, time, and causality. ‘Remember the superconscious never contradicts reason. It transcends it, but contradicts it never’ as stated by Swamiji.¹² Brian David Josephson, in this context cited the interesting analogy of biosystems in which there is no degree of control over the internal structure of the system under investigation.¹³ As a result, causality in classical physics is turned into chance in quantum physics. For what we call ‘chance’ or ‘accident’ there always exists an intuitive subtle cause which is not grossly manifested, which is why it is overlooked at the superficial level. This simply reveals that quantum mechanics is more intuitive than classical physics, which may seem paradoxical at first glance.

What is Mysticism?

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the ‘mystical’ as having ‘a spiritual symbolic or allegorical significance that transcends human understanding’. In the mystical experience the individual self is completely dissolved and identified with the ultimate Reality. William James identified four hallmarks of mystical experience: ineffability, noetic quality, transiency, and passivity.¹⁴ The name of this ineffable state in Vedanta is described as Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss—*sat, chit, ananda*. The general experience of beauty in nature is not mystical because it fulfils only

the ineffability criterion. One does not claim that one has become one with the beautiful object. As with most of our experiences there is certainly a unity in our perception of beautiful things. Many of our experiences also do involve a loss of self, but it is imprecise to term them mystic. In the words of Radhakrishnan, the mystic experience is one ‘in which feelings are fused, ideas melt into one another, boundaries broken and ordinary distinctions transcended. ... In this fullness of the felt life and freedom, the distinction of the knower and the known disappears. The privacy of the individual self is broken into and invaded by a universal self which the individual feels as his own.’¹⁵ Once one is qualified, the experience is spontaneous and sudden. Apart from the traditional mystics, whose mindframes are essentially religiously-oriented and who undergo various spiritual disciplines to attain that mystical state, there are poets, philosophers, and scientists too, who have had a sudden visionary experience once or even several times in their life, without the practice of esoteric discipline. Pascal, Bucke, Tennyson, Wordsworth, and Tagore are some examples of this kind of mystical vision.

Of the three levels of mental states, instinct is inbuilt and unconscious, below the plane of reason; intellect is conscious and on the plane of reason; and the spiritual experience lies above the plane of reason, therefore is superconscious. The mystery is with this third state, identified as ‘mystic’ of which most of us are not aware and cannot justifiably explain, although from prehistoric ages till to the present it has existed and manifested in quite a few persons, and has been well documented. It is this level of ‘superconscious’ which transcends space, time, and causality.

Spiritual phenomena involve three key components: actual experience, high moral

perfection, and physiological transformation enabling transcendence. For example, the secular practice of meditation is associated with a range of physiological effects, including lower blood pressure, lower cortisol, cortical thickening, and activation of brain areas associated with attention and emotion regulation.¹⁶ And real experience involves active participation, not simply reading or hearing about something. Sri Ramakrishna often used to say that it is not growing horns on one's head but profound change in character with steady wisdom.¹⁷ He used to give another illustration: 'Some have heard of milk, some have seen milk, and some have drunk milk' (802–3, 836, 344). The whole personality and character of the perceiver is transformed. A sustainable experience requires a proper container. In this case, what is required is purity or perfection of body-mind complex through elimination of lust, greed, and anger. We commonly hear of people having a transient experience gained by psychosomatic drugs which temporarily elevates the mind through suppressing the restless mind, but this is not sustained because of lack of purity or perfection. The fact that such temporary state can be attained is also mentioned in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*.¹⁸ Some such techniques are birth, medicine, mantra, and austerity. Literally, 'transcend' means to climb beyond. The idea of transcendence has deep roots. Transcendence in religion implies a reality that is not purely material. It was by a call of the Transcendent that the masters—the musicians Beethoven and Mozart; the painters Rembrandt and Van Gogh; the poets John Donne and William Butler Yeats; and even some of the greatest scientists, like Newton and Einstein, experienced such a state. *Katha Upanishad* has elaborated that it cannot be attained either through the agency of the senses or through intellectual speculations as such.¹⁹ Due to inadequacies of the intellect, one must

transcend the limitations of the senses. Being analytical, the intellect tends to visualise things in a piecemeal manner while the experience of a mystic is supreme synthesis. It is the state when the five instruments of knowledge—the senses—and their controller—the mind, stand still and the intellect does not function.

From times immemorial the mystical state has been held to be a vision of divinity, God, Brahman, or any celestial or supernatural being. There have been well-known mystics in modern times in whom ecstasy started from childhood, as in the case of Sri Ramakrishna, Guru Nanak, and Jnaneshwar. The state of intense absorption was, as it were, a natural state of the mind, though with intense practice. Mystical vision

Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888–1975)



and the miracles associated with it, now classified as psychic phenomena, have assumed an urgency and importance that they never possessed before during the last two centuries of psychology. This shows how erroneous the intellect can be. The widespread thirst for self-awareness or the occult side of nature, which is a striking feature of our day, is utterly inexplicable in the light of modern psychology.

Mysticism, as it is a form of subjective experience, cannot be investigated with intellectual objective understanding. In conventional science, our knowledge is objective and the approach of the scientific method erects an impermeable wall between the subject and the object. But in mystical experience we are transcended to a state/plane where the veil between the knower and the known is lifted, only the knowledge remains, and the apparent duality is erased. This is the basic concept in Advaita Vedanta. Vedanta urges us to live in constant union with the infinite whole, losing our individual identification with names and forms. This cannot be described by any linguistic categories or even through subjective identity. Mysticism in the real sense of the term means extra-sensual perception of our inbuilt reality, which is intrinsically connected with many supernatural experiences that cannot be explained by normal human reasoning and are often falsely identified with occultism, magic, drug-induced experiences, or other altered states.

There can be different levels of mystic experiences depending upon one's temperament, outlook, and mental constitution. Often one's conduct and character manifest the intensity of mystical experience. But one thing is certain: a mystic is totally unconnected with the materialistic aspect of life, so body-consciousness is gone and the person is apparently experiencing a power which is beyond space and time. Our senses and intellect operate within

the framework of time and space. Our sensations and thoughts are rooted in time and space, which inherently condition our worldly experience. But the mystical experience is independent of any such conditioning or limitation. It is beyond space, time, and causality. Consequently, a mystic is completely at a loss to communicate the experience. Words fail, the person feels choked and stifled. A mystic often advocates the language of silence. The experience sometimes comes in the form of visions, voices, or some supernatural favours, although supernatural or miraculous powers are never sought, regarded as a hindrance to spiritual life. These experiences are described in five religious or spiritual traditions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Sufism, and Kabbalah, yet are incomprehensible to human reasoning. Mystics form an uncommon class of people who, though belonging to different religions, countries, races, and ages, all 'speak the same language' in the words of Saint-Martin.²⁰ The visions often bear great significance for their future spiritual life. Einstein said 'the fairest thing we can experience is the mysterious'.²¹ Again Sri Ramakrishna's experience and also his illustrative parables may be cited as examples. He used to say, 'Something rises with a tingling sensation from the feet to the head. So long as it does not reach the brain, I remain conscious, but the moment it does so I am dead to the outside world.'²²

Mystical knowledge cannot be obtained by mere observation but only through participation, and only if one is qualified. This participation is fundamental in mystical tradition. The mental equipment required for subjective method needs to be highly specialised and purified; since Nature does not confide her secrets causally to anyone, they are accessible only to a qualified few. We are limited by the very nature of our mind since what we assimilate is what we

express. The mind needs training in both cases, but especially in the latter case, since the mental equipment is required to transcend space-time-causality barrier and it needs supreme moral perfection to be able to arrive at new power of understanding. If, however, the mind is trained in one direction it would be easier to pursue the latter. The acquired subjective knowledge of Vedanta philosophy has existed for at least three thousand years, and has nothing to do with the so-called mystical physics, which is only a newborn child of the last century. But it appears that the behaviour of the subatomic particles is similar to the experiences of mystics. As Capra asserted, the principal ideas of modern physics 'confirm', 'rediscover', or otherwise parallel the ideas of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism.²³ Modern physics entered this dimension through quantum windows and relativity, through space, time, and causality, while the Eastern ideas were discovered through the inner investigation of consciousness. According to Swamiji's definition, 'Religion is not in doctrines, in dogmas, nor in intellectual argumentation; it is being and becoming, it is realisation.'²⁴

Some occult powers, as described in *Vibhuti Pada* of the *Yoga Sutra*, may or may not come; however, such powers are not regarded as indications of mystical experience. By the path of yoga one can get mystical experience, and it is considered a miraculous harvest of yogic discipline that one can also achieve *ashta-siddhis*, eight powers: ability to read others' thoughts, become small, large, heavy, light, to fly, invisibility of the body, and ability to levitate. These are all distractions for a yogi and can act as impediments to progress in the path of self-realisation. As a person progresses in the path of realisation, these may occur naturally; one should put them aside if one wants to proceed onwards, lest one become enamoured by them, as their attainment

will be an enormous ego-booster and thus will prevent one's further progress. Depending upon one's choice and temperament, one or more of the yogas—jnana, bhakti, karma, or raja—has to be adapted as one's path. All that is required is the three-fold course in *ashtanga-marga*, eight limbs, of Patanjali which are categorised as high moral elevation, physical training of the body, and steady mental concentration. All true mystics have been people of intense sacrifice, moral greatness, austerity, and contentment, and models of simplicity and unworldliness. These are essential prerequisites for success in this sublime quest. Once one is qualified the experience is not gradual or progressive but spontaneous and sudden.

In the experience, the privacy of the individual self is invaded by a universal self. The difference between a mystical experience and a worldly experience is that the mystical experience leaves a lasting and indelible impression on the self by virtue of its subjectivity, which does not happen due to the objectivity in the case of the worldly experience. The mystic is not completely lost or melted away in the undifferentiated One like a rain drop in ocean; the person remains existentially a distinct being. An example to illustrate this is a red-hot iron, where the heat does not become the iron, or the iron heat. If this were not so, the logic of working hard to earn spiritual experience would not stand; one then would be completely deprived of the fruit—enjoyment of the blissful state. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, Acharya Shankara retained the ego of knowledge in order to teach human beings, while the Divine Mother has kept for him the purified ego as 'ego of servant', 'ego of child', 'ego of devotion', so that he is not lost in the undifferentiated One, but to remain *bhava-mukha*, the threshold of consciousness.

'Mysteries' in Quantum Physics as Against Familiar Classical Physics

In the laws of physics, we attempt to understand the natural order governing the material world through our experience and experimentation. The foundations of this so-called classical physics were laid in the late seventeenth century. It is also termed as Newtonian physics, because Isaac Newton formulated this mechanical motion through unification of earlier works of Copernicus, Kepler, Bacon, Galileo, and Descartes. He posited that the physical world is made up of separate, irreducible building blocks of matter, the movements of which could be predicted and observed by a neutral observer. It has been remarkably successful in explaining macroscopic events and has attained an iconic status of reliability. Everything in nature could be explained in terms of mechanical laws, termed as causality or deterministic physics. Any interactions are independent of human observation. Every action is completely determined by mechanical

René Descartes (1596–1650)



conditions alone, without one's thought, idea, feeling, or intuition. Using this deterministic rule of classical or Newtonian physics, the course of future events can be exactly predicted. In this way logic and common sense are established. In the social regime, Newtonian physics apparently influenced the thinking of Karl Marx, Adam Smith, and Charles Darwin into the regime of causality. This close linking of cause and effect influenced the economic viewpoint of Karl Marx in his theories of class struggle, Adam Smith's self-regulating liberal economy, and Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. The IQ—Intelligence Quotient—was developed in 1912 with the hope of providing scientific justification for measuring human intelligence. But as in the other examples of improper application of classical physics to human social phenomena, IQ is not the sole criteria for human intelligence, thus Emotional Intelligence quotient (EQ), and the supreme, Spiritual Intelligence quotient (SQ), have subsequently taken over.

While classical physics attempts to describe the physical reality macroscopically in concrete, easily understandable terms, quantum physics deals with the microscopic world of atoms and subatomic particles, such as electrons and protons, which are inaccessible to direct perception. Classical physics' focus is on macro objects, things we can see around us, not on atomic level objects. In the new realm of microscopic phenomena, things behave very strangely, and our common logic no longer holds. It is even nonlinear, the output is not proportional to the input and, unlike the macroscopic, not a linear combination of independent components. Quantum physics views the subtle particles as nonphysical and nonlocal, interconnecting this universe as a united whole on all levels—from subatomic particles to the outermost galaxies. There is a paradigm shift, as if the qualities of objects have changed. The two original

architects of quantum theory are Max Planck, for black-body radiation in 1900, where radiation is emitted not continuously, but in tiny discrete packets, named quanta; and Neils Bohr, for the development of the theory of atomic spectra in 1913, where emission of radiation from atoms can take place in quantum of energy. It is often said in the quantum regime that things do not exist in physical form, unless they are observed by a conscious observer. So, it is the observer that determines its existence. In contrast, the classical laws of mechanics affirm there is always a separation between the object known and the knower.

Quantum physics is not restricted to the microscopic world of nuclei, atoms, and molecules but can be applied also to macroscopic systems. We recognise that many modern inventions and appliances have come about as a result of quantum research. It is astonishing to note that quantum mechanics strengthens the range of scientific discovery for practical applications. An estimated, about thirty percent of the US gross national product is based on inventions only made possible by quantum mechanics; these range from semiconductors in computer chips to lasers in compact-disc players, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) in hospitals, and many others.²⁵ It is true that without quantum physics, we would be unable to describe many phenomena such as the structure and function of DNA, the mechanism of brain and many other actions inside our body, and also the stability of atoms, chemical bonds, diodes, transistors, and light emitting diodes (LEDs) in the world of fascinating displays, cell phones, TVs, lasers, and many other modern devices. Interestingly, in current high level discussions consciousness is being treated as macro-quantum effect with involvement of superconductivity, super-fluidity, and Bose-Einstein condensation.

The following are the interrelated features of quantum physics:

1. Quantum Step or Discreteness

While action is continuous at the macroscopic level, the action in quantum physics is discrete, designated as quanta occurring in steps starting often not from zero. This quantum and minimum serve as characteristics of the system.

2. Uncertainty or Beyond Space, Time, and Causality

It is revealed that certain events happening in microscopic or sub-atomic regime, termed as the quantum world, cannot be asserted but can be surmised with probabilities which hinder exact or precise descriptions in place of causality or determinism, breaking our common sense. The Copenhagen interpretation of quantum physics reinterprets it as inherently non-mechanical and irrational. But in later developments, quantum indeterminism is also interpreted as causation but from subtler, non-physical rather than animated levels so that our acts of free will are involved through our self-conscious minds.

3. Duality

The central strangest feature of the quantum world is the notion that objects exhibit dual behaviour, they are neither particle nor wave, but they exhibit both types of behaviour depending upon external conditions. Both aspects are necessary for the complete description; they are complementary *but not contradictory*.

4. Interconnectedness, Oneness

In the quantum view we cannot decompose the world into independently existing smallest units, there is an inherent interconnectedness, where *everything is connected to everything else*. There are only wholes and not parts, implying deep unity, which no technology can reveal. The classical description is based on the decomposition of a system into a collection of simple independent local elements, and where the whole is determined by the behaviour of parts.



Niels Bohr (1885–1962)

5. Conscious Observer

Quantum physics asserts the conscious observer has an essential role in the experiment, termed as subjective role, although in classical physics the observer is outside the scenario of events, as if the observer is inside a glass-paned room and there is no way for them to interfere in outside measurement.

Because of these peculiarities, the quantum theory was initially seen by many as a rather unclear theory because probabilities and uncertainties hinder precise descriptions. Quantum physics is shocking because quantum experiments reveal the abovementioned mysterious properties that challenge our physical worldview. To tackle these contradictions, some of the prominent pioneers—including Schrödinger, Heisenberg, Bohr, Oppenheimer, and David Bohm—turned to Vedanta of

Eastern philosophy. These early founders connected quantum mechanics to the mysticism of Vedanta and Upanishads from Indian traditions. These brilliant scientists speculated the connection between these two because they were aware of Vedic texts. Niels Bohr was first accused by Einstein of introducing ‘mystic’ elements in his explanation of quantum physics—mystic elements which in Einstein’s view had no place in science. Both Bohr and Schrödinger, the founders of quantum physics, were avid readers of Vedic texts and observed that their experiments in quantum physics appeared consistent with what they had read in the Vedas. Heisenberg has well said: ‘What we observe is not nature in itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning.’²⁶ Vedanta has always spoken about the importance of the conscious observer; it stresses the perceiver’s responsibility. The mystic and the physicist have now apparently arrived at a similar conclusion, one starting from the inner realm, the other from the outer world. Newton’s classical, objective science is devoted only to that which is observed, while the Eastern mystics have pushed this other notion to the extreme, to a point where the observer and the observed, the subject and the object, are not only inseparable but also become indistinguishable. The *Mundaka Upanishad* says that this consciousness cannot be seen by the eyes, cannot be heard by the ear, and cannot even be worked out by the ordinary logical and worldly, so-called ‘prejudiced’ intellect, but can only be realised through a purified mind.²⁷

So the mind, the instrument of perception, can be made superconscious after going through the process of ultra-purification, becoming freed from both subtle and gross bondage. One way by which it can be purified is through the practices of *yama* and *niyama*, as described in Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutra*. The ancient wisdom of Eastern

philosophy has asserted and assigned primary importance to this cogniser, instead of the act of cognition, as Physics has been doing. This perceiver is Atman or Brahman in Vedanta, while in Science it has been the ordinary mind or intelligence. For Eastern mystics, all things and events perceived by human senses are interrelated and interconnected and are but different manifestations of the same ultimate Reality. In contrast, Western thinking understands and perceives the world as a multitude of separate objects and events. Quantum physics has abolished the notion of independent, separated parts through the introduction of a participator at the scenario in place of an observer. To further describe this, David Bohm offers an explanation of reality involving an 'implicate' and 'explicate' order.²⁸ All order is stored at all times in the implicate order in an unmanifested state. Information continually becomes manifest from the implicate order as the explicate order of our experience. This is termed as super-deterministic order by some. Although he accepts the reality of a whole, containing distinguishable parts, it is devoid of variety or individuality. The hologram provides an easily understandable example of this, which he cited to illustrate this concept more clearly, because in a hologram, the whole picture is present in each part of the hologram. In fact, a hologram is capable of storing thousands of two-dimensional pictures in different perspectives of the object.

Some Connections of Quantum Physics with Vedanta

The journey from classical physics to quantum physics is from a gross, separated, causal world to a mystical, subtle, oneness kingdom of spirituality. 'In their struggle to grasp the nature of atomic phenomena, scientists became painfully aware that their basic concepts, their language,

and their whole way of thinking were inadequate to describe this new reality', says Fritjof Capra.²⁹ The theory of indeterminism in nature apparently conveys the message that the secrets of nature's functioning would not be let known to scientists. This Newtonian view of science is quite contradictory to Vedanta. The God of Vedanta is the Absolute beyond all relativity, all space, time, and causation. In looking for the unifying force that is the building block of the universe, quantum physics has put us closer to the Vedanta viewpoint. It suggests that we abolish the absolute separation between the known and the knower and accept the fact that mind and matter are co-dependent, each depending on the other for its existence. Some of the basic parallels between quantum physics and mysticism are discussed below.

A. Probability or Law of Karma and Quantum Jump

Success in our life is unpredictable but we always keep on our efforts for a breakthrough, even though causality is the only certain law in this world. Newton's laws form the basis of this causality, which dictates that progress is determined by the amount of effort we invest. Our thought processes are habituated to follow the logic of classical physics. But sometimes such logical process leads us to no conclusion. Then after a long unsuccessful search, suddenly sometimes new ideas may emerge through inspiration from beyond the limits of well-defined conceptual terms. This is often referred to as a quantum jump. At this so-called quantum level, the thinking process is apparently determined by an inherent past experience, for example, of pleasure, pain, taste, or similar previous experience. Some people even believe that life on earth originated with a similar quantum leap.

In the old quantum theory explanation of atomic spectra—being the characteristic light

emitted from an atom—Neils Bohr proposed that the revolving electron around the nucleus of an atom can experience a quantum jump only under the influence of an external agency, forcing the emission of characteristic radiation, otherwise the electron would continue to revolve around the nucleus of the atom in the same orbit without any emission. Although in the classical theory Newton's second law admits that this can occur only with additional effort—that is, with external energy one would be able to lift an electron from the usual state to a new state—in quantum mechanics this quantum jump to other state is interpreted as a probabilistic event determined by the so-called overlapping integral—that is, the extent of overlapping of the initial state with that of the final state. In Vedanta, according to Acharya Shankara, a person continues from birth to death and is reborn again to live the same life unless they achieve/realise a quantum jump to a higher life or to liberation. This latter is also probabilistic, depending upon the grace of God. This can occur only for those spiritual aspirants who have prepared for this, apart from fulfilling all the objective requirements. Various scriptures codify basically cutting off oneself from the world outside, both externally and internally, as a necessary condition for attaining moral perfection. But final transformation is indeed uncertain depending upon the perfection achieved. This transformation is the subjective aspect. This subjectivity in spirituality involves physiological transformation in body-mind complex after being established in moral excellence. Vedanta, in the Gita,³⁰ says that in spite of one's wholehearted efforts, there exists an unseen factor, often termed as *adrishta* or *daiva*, an invisible merit, that turns out to be crucial in determining the realisation of the fruits of action. The question of probability of attaining this success also has been elaborated in

the Gita (7.3), which states that out of thousands who try, one and perhaps only one could be successful. There are various techniques across a wide variety of Vedanta literature describing the way one is prepared for this upgradation. These include, for example, *Narada Bhakti Sutras*, Patanjali *Yoga Sutras*, and also in the Gita, importance is given to one's association with illumined personalities.

B. Conscious Observer / Interconnectedness / Beyond Space, Time, Causality (STC)

Everything in nature is determined in terms of mechanical laws termed as causality but at the level of quantum physics objects and events are dependent on human observation. If the mental process of experiencing pleasure or pain has no effect upon physical world, the question arises: what keeps a person's mental world aligned with physical situations? Conscious actions do make a difference in real term. The Copenhagen interpretation of quantum theory developed by Bohr and Heisenberg reveals an essential interconnectedness of the universe. We cannot decompose the world into independently existing smallest units. Any object is a manifestation of the interaction between the processes of preparation and measurement. Penetrating deeper into matter, we find that it is made of particles, but these are not the 'basic building blocks' in the way Newton meant. Isolated material particles are only abstractions, their properties being definable and observable only through their interactions with other systems. Science extends boundaries of the ignorance as one digs deeper. The more we know the more we want to know so the boundaries of knowledge and ignorance are limitless. Any attempts to quantify this, leading thereby to dissolution of the problem, are as if a salt doll were trying to measure depth of the ocean, to borrow an analogy from Sri Ramakrishna.³¹ How can the knower know

himself? According to Sir James Jeans: 'Trying to observe the inner working of an atom is like plucking off the wings of a butterfly to see how it flies ... Each observation destroys the bit of the universe observed.'³² As a result, the physical science deals with a dead rather than with a living world. In Plank's words 'Science cannot solve the ultimate mystery of nature ... we ourselves are a part of the mystery that we are trying to solve.'³³ We are made captive to this world with the lower mind which needs to be disciplined for manifestation of higher mind. But the problem is that the lower mind is overwhelmed by the external world through the senses. This mind only knows how to function and orient itself in the realm of objects. The higher mind is boundless. According to the Yoga philosophy, there are seven levels of mind. It expresses 'worldliness' at the three lower planes: the navel, the organ of generation, and the organ of evacuation. The higher mind includes the heart, the throat, the forehead, and the top of the head. Our higher mind tries to share with us the eternal joy. There are many functions in our body that take place without our attention. These involuntary actions include respiration, digestion, homeostasis, and others that take place automatically. Respiration is perhaps the only action in our body that is both voluntary and involuntary. Through rhythmic breathing the yogis can control various actions in their bodies and minds. By obstructing the free working of the higher mind, we lose the fruits of higher or cosmic mind. Only the wise, who through withdrawing their ego let the cosmic mind play the life game freely, have the best development, since in this state the body, mind, and senses work consonantly. Karma is the action of lower mind bound by causality, while *akarma* is the free flow of action from the cosmic mind. The Gita highlights this.³⁴

Patanjali *Yoga Sutra*³⁵ prescribes the technique by which one can attain this state through the change of perception of the world from self-centric to cosmo-centric. This is also echoed in the Bhagavata, which says that the immortal Brahman alone is before, that Brahman is behind, that Brahman is to the right and left.³⁶ Brahman alone pervades everything above and below; this universe is that supreme Brahman alone.

C. Action at Distance, Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen (EPR) Paradox

In classical physics all influences are transmitted essentially by contact interactions between the neighbouring parts and there are no influences propagating faster than the speed of light. But in quantum theory, a 'change in the spin of one particle in a two-particle system would affect its twin simultaneously, even if the two had been widely separated in the meantime.'³⁷ This *simultaneous* occurring is not allowed in special relativity, as it is a part of classical physics, which forbids the transmission of any signal faster than the speed of light.

An important characteristic of the Eastern worldview is the awareness of the unity and mutual interrelation of all things and events. The basic oneness of the universe is the central characteristic of the mystical experience; this is also one of the most important revelations in quantum physics. The mystic's vision is of a world where they participate in its seamless existence, they are indivisibly united with the universe around them. This is indeed no different from the view put forth in 1964 by the physicist John S Bell. This vision becomes apparent at the atomic level, manifesting increasingly as one penetrates deeper into the realm of subatomic particles. In modern physics, the question of consciousness has arisen in connection with the observation of atomic phenomena. Quantum theory has made

it clear that these phenomena can only be understood as links in a chain of processes, the end of which lies in the consciousness of the human observer. Nature as it exists is not 'something' that is limited to what we observe. Because we observe, we see what we see. The entanglement of photons—also true for electrons and other fundamental particles—seen in the EPR, the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen paradox experiments, raises questions as to why they are not seen in objects of larger sizes.³⁸ The answer is because our limited vision of the universe creates what we experience. The EPR paradox experiments showed that each particle readjusts itself in response to any change in the state of its counterpart, which might even be several millions of miles away. Regardless of how far apart the two particles are the change occurs instantaneously—at a speed faster than the speed of light. This is the mystery of entanglement. Readjustment is instantaneous and happens without any kind of messaging link between them like the speed of light. An invisible wholeness unites the objects that are given birth in the universe. Thus, objects in the physical world cannot be regarded as distinct, separate entities.

D. Wave-Particle Duality and the Reality

Duality, a central concept of quantum physics, addresses the inadequacy of classical concepts of objects to meaningfully describe the behaviour of quantum objects like 'particle' and 'wave'. Louis de Broglie originally established that all objects exhibit wave/particle duality to some extent and the larger the object is the harder it is to observe the wave behaviour. Wave-particle duality asserts that light and matter exhibit properties of both waves and particles. This duality is a quantum phenomenon observable in photons, electrons, protons, and other ultra-tiny objects. Quantum theory states that light or electromagnetics in general

is emitted in quantum of energy, in this case a photon. Bohr stated in his complementarity principle that the wave and the particle properties of light are complementary but not contradictory; both are essential to a complete description of light. Likewise the human body is a complementary union of machine-like and non-machine-like properties. The machine-like properties can be investigated rationally based on bio-cybernetics. Schrödinger, in his 1933 Nobel Lecture, explained that the new paradigm replaces 'either-or' with 'both-and'.³⁹ The Relativity theory of Einstein indicates that all sense perceptions are relative.

Vedanta says that Reality cannot be constrained by a particular form which limits its behaviour, but can be formless as well, so it has an infinite number of dimensions. The Reality remains the same, although it appears in different names and forms, *nama* and *rupa*. It is without any intrinsic attributes. Sri Ramakrishna often used to say that Brahman, the Ultimate Reality cannot be limited by any form. Personalities may vary, persons may be numerous, but the basic humanness remains the same. Viewed by the senses, it is finite; upon penetrating deeper, it reveals its infinite dimensions.

Vedanta also says one has only to find the constituent and not to get lost in the different varieties. Some examples that illustrate the difference are: the sugar in sugar sweets, and the gold in golden ornaments. Vedanta advises to destroy the prison house of name and form, clearing mind of its afflictions, and also to keep the mind sharp and maintain tranquillity, to not lose mental balance and to maintain equanimity. From the perspective of ultimate reality, the differences between pairs of opposites or binaries are relative. However, the conflicts and tensions generated by the pairs of opposites provide the motivating force for humans to

move towards the transcendental level. Sensual joys are only trickles of the infinite bliss of Brahman, proclaims Vedanta. The Self in every one of us is also the Self of the universe in the form of consciousness. This truth is corroborated by Erwin Schrodinger, in an epilogue to *What is Life?*: ‘Consciousness is never experienced in the plural, only in the singular. ... Consciousness is a singular of which the plural is unknown.’⁴⁰ The polar opposites are never a static quantity, but a dynamic play between two extremes. One must learn to navigate through these contrary currents so that one can benefit from the ascending spiritual force and avoid the descending unspiritual inertia. Nature possesses a qualitative energy through which we can either expand into wisdom or contract into ignorance. This navigation is nicely illustrated by Swami Vivekananda in a story he narrated to the then-famous French singer and actress Emma Calve when she was under deep depression:

One day a drop of water fell into the vast ocean. ... When it found itself there, it began to weep and complain just as you are doing. The great ocean laughed at the drop of water. ‘Why do you weep?’ it asked. ‘I do not understand. When you join me, you join all your brothers and sisters, the other drops of water of which I am made. You become the ocean itself. If you wish to leave me, you have to only rise up on a sunbeam into the clouds. From there you can descend again, a little drop of water, a blessing and a benediction to the thirsty earth.’⁴¹

In the Gita, this is illustrated by the total unidentifiable river water terminating at the vast unfathomable ocean which is unaffected though constantly being filled.⁴² Also, in the Gita, Sri Krishna’s advice to Arjuna is to absorb worldly opposites and be *trigunatita* or *nirguna* (2.45). One is required to be *nirguna*, without quality or condition-less, beyond duality.



Louis de Broglie (1892–1987)

With the introduction of probability into this quantum world, physicists have found yet another area of striking resemblance to Eastern mysticism. Describing the probability of a particle existing in a certain place, Robert Oppenheimer says: ‘If we ask whether the position of the particle remains the same, we must say “no”, if we ask whether the electron’s position changes with time, we must say “no”. If we ask whether the electron is at rest, we must say “no”, if we ask whether it is in motion, we must say “no”.’⁴³ This closely echoes the words of the *Katha Upanishad*, a sacred book of Hinduism where it is said: ‘It moves, it moves not; it is far, and it is near. It is within all this, and it is outside of all this.’⁴⁴

The Search for Reconciliation

Quantum theory seems to describe our overall activities both as knowledge-seeking and knowledge-acquiring agents. It is the agent that exploits the concepts of science in our life from

theory. The two kinds of descriptions jointly comprise the active foundation of reality. Niels Bohr, himself the founder of quantum theory, stated in his later years: 'On the scene of existence we are ourselves actors as well as spectators.'⁴⁵ In the words of Aldous Huxley: 'Man possesses a double nature, a phenomenal ego and an eternal Self, which is the inner man, the spirit, the spark of divinity within the soul. It is possible for a man, if he so desires, to identify himself with the spirit and therefore with the Divine Ground, which is of the same or like nature with the spirit.'⁴⁶

Mystical knowledge can never be obtained by observation, but it involves the full participation of the body-mind-intellect complex. The observed, the observer, and the knowledge are indistinguishable. The subject and object of Heisenberg uncertainty principle are fused into an unified and undivided whole.

The *shanti* mantra, invocatory verse, of the *Isha Upanishad* dictates in the same tune:

Pure consciousness is perfect fullness. This manifest universe of matter, of names and forms in being, is full. This fullness has been projected from perfect fullness. When fullness merges in perfect fullness, all that remains is fullness. That [supreme Brahman] is infinite. This [the manifested universe that in reality is Brahman couched in name and form] is infinite. From [that] infinite has been projected [this] infinite. Taking the infinitude of [this] infinite, [that] infinite [supreme Brahman] alone remains.

Reference may be made to what Swamiji said to Mary Hale on God or Brahman: 'All this is not, God alone is!'⁴⁷

This idea is reflected also in the Gita, where Sri Krishna talks about *kshetra* and *kshetrajna*.⁴⁸ The word *kshetra* literally means the field of manifestation or experience and the word *kshetrajna* means the knower of the field of manifestation,

that is, the observer. All that exists, moveable and immovable, comes about by the union of the *kshetra* and the *kshetrajna*, being the totality of knowledge. The knowledge of the *kshetra*, object and *kshetrajna*, subject together form the totality of knowledge. We must go beyond appearances so that the whole experience could be taken into consideration. Unless all facts are obtained, we cannot arrive at true knowledge. We, being the subject, are no longer passive observers of the universe and the world around us; we have started to accept that we are part of it. We have entered a period of thought where processes have replaced objects, and feelings have replaced logic. We have begun to believe that borders between countries should be lifted. We are living in a global village network where economic or political upheavals in any country in the world can within minutes affect other economies in the world. While Newtonian physics held sway, it was accepted that life was wholly observable, measurable, and quantifiable, and social events, the economy, supply and demand, and almost everything else was understood in a reductionist way as the sum of its components. But this is no longer true; holistic growth and interconnections are now the general themes. This is what Vedanta has been visualising. Both Eastern mysticism and modern physics speak of reality as transcending space, time, and causality. The same idea is reflected in the scripture *Mundaka Upanishad* where both the *para vidya*, meaning higher knowledge, and *apara vidya*, lower knowledge, together form the totality in supreme knowledge, both kinds of knowledge need to be cultivated in our lives; they are complementary to each other.⁴⁹

The apparent conflict between conventional science and mysticism is a conflict between two types of knowledge, objective and subjective. The objective method of assessment

in conventional science is the sole cause of this conflict. The conscious observer is introduced as the upper mind. It should be independent of the sense organs, able to guide, control, and discipline the sense organs. But its real status is when it is able to say 'no' to the sense organs, or 'yes' to the sense organs, as a result of its own discrimination. The introduction of Vedanta is an attempt to solve the problem by going beyond the appearance, that is, the objectivity, termed *nama* and *rupa*, meaning name and form. Introducing this mystical idea into quantum theory has enriched the convergence of mysticism while physics as physics continues to probe deeper and deeper into nature.

A Glimpse of Contradictory Views

Victor Stenger finds: 'Reductionist Classical Physics did not make people egoists. People were egoists long before reductionist classical physics. In fact, classical physics has nothing to say about humans except that they are material objects like rocks and trees, made of nothing more than the same atoms—just more cleverly organized by the impersonal forces of self-organization and evolution.'⁵⁰ He continues: 'Thoughts of our participation in cosmic consciousness inflate our egos to the point where we can ignore our shortcomings and even forget our mortality' (ibid.). There is no point in blaming science, but with proper wisdom one should interpret to evaluate the developments.

John Ankerberg and John Weldon comment on Ken Wilber's *The Holographic Paradigm and Other Paradoxes*:⁵¹ 'He [Ken Wilber] points out that the mystic and physicist aren't even talking about the same worlds. The "new physics" has nothing to do with the so-called "higher" levels of "mental" reality that mystics claim to encounter ... it is obviously irrelevant when it comes to living in the day-to-day world. ... the physicist

sees a "oneness" at the sub-atomic level, but not in the real world.'⁵²

The crucial question has been how to bridge the gap between causality and non-causality. The principle of causality is the rule for scientific world, while non-causality or probability is for the spiritual, mystic world. In the former view, 'God helps those who help themselves', the result is as much as the efforts put in; while in the latter, 'God helps those who do not help themselves', indicating that the outcome is irrespective of self effort. Quantum physics serves as a bridge by shifting the paradigm, as it took the bold step of including subjectivity, in the form of a conscious observer, in addition to objectivity, and hence oneness in scenario. Quantum physics is the link, the bridge, over the centuries-old chasm between science and religions; it is the 'science of transcendence' we have been waiting for, given that there is a deep disparity between how we perceive the world and the way things really are. The only problematic aspect of quantum jump is that we cannot be sure when the electron jumps or where it jumps to, the best we can do is to figure a probability curve. And locality was crucial to classical physics, in order to have objects existing independently and separate from one another, but quantum objects spread like a cloud over great distances and collapse only when observed.

Finally, it has been stated emphatically by leading neuroscientist Sultan Tarlac, in an editorial on *Probabilistic Quantum Thinking*:

Quantum Physics is not only the Physics of non-living matter. In our biological makeup, a large number of events, millions even, are taking place that involve Quantum Physics. ... Even though we do not at present have very strong evidence, there is great likelihood that in the nervous system, some higher cognitive functions such as consciousness, mind and learning are related to this kind of quantum neurobiological process, only more complicated.⁵³

Time and science will give us the best proof of this.

The fundamental levels of existence cannot be explained by scientific concepts. Moreover, some have realised that the function of science is not to explain the basis of existence, but rather to give us a framework for understanding our perception of it. This is a quantum leap in scientific attitude. Our fundamental nature is inexplicable. Modern science and mystical systems are starting to speak the same language. We have entered a period of thought where subjectivity has replaced objectivity. There is no sharp separation between object and subject, the observer and the observed, since the observer, like the mystic, is an active participant in the experiment, and forms the whole together with whatever is being observed. The only thing that one has to be cautious about with the novel concept of the 'conscious observer' introduced in quantum physics, is judiciously withdrawing one's ego from where it is not needed. This observer is not passive but conscious, and thus capable of discrimination. This is the awakening of *viveka*, discernment, which is one of the prime teachings of Vedanta, as illustrated in the Gita,⁵⁴ where causality and non-causality are nicely elaborated through introduction of *karta* and *akarta*, one's authority and non-authority in work.

Albert Einstein stated:

A human being ... is a part of the whole, called by us "Universe", a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its

beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security.⁵⁵



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Swami Vivekananda and Others on the Impact of Nirguna Brahman on the Phenomenal World

Gopal Stavig

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT aspects of Swami Vivekananda's interpretation of Advaita Vedanta is his emphasis on the influence of *nirguna* Brahman on phenomenal existence. There are a number of reasons for realising that *nirguna* Brahman is not 'wholly other' or 'totally other' from a finite existence. The fact that *nirvikalpa* samadhi has been attained by the greatest spiritual souls while living in a human body requires that there is some connection between the absolute and relative realms of existence. There must be a bridge that connects them. If *nirguna* Brahman is 'wholly other', it could not be realised by a person with a human mind living in a physical body. We are always intimately related to *nirguna* Brahman that is present everywhere, though consciously we may not be aware of it. Since the most spiritual souls like Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji realised this, that means they resemble its nature more than other people. Again if the Reality is completely unknowable, almost nothing could have been written about it in the religious scriptures or by the philosophers. The devotees can identify more with an immanent God that directly affects their life, than a transcendent God that is in another realm.

What follows are some of the *nirguna* Brahman functions in phenomenal existence. The first five are associated more with *chit*, consciousness, the

sixth with *ananda*, bliss and love, and the last four with *sat*, existence or being. There is a tendency to attribute subjective *chit* and *ananda* functions to the Atman rather than to *nirguna* Brahman.

No Rationality or Perception without Nirguna Brahman

Acharya Shankara, the Advaita Vedantic seer-philosopher expounded:

There is a self-existent Reality, which is the basis of our consciousness of ego. That Reality is the witness [*Sakshin*], of the three states of our consciousness, and, is distinct from the five bodily coverings. That Reality is the knower in all states of consciousness—waking, dreaming and dreamless sleep. It is aware of the presence or absence of the mind and its functions. It is the Atman. ... It gives intelligence to the mind and the intellect, but no one gives it light.¹ ...

By its light, the universe is revealed. ... The Atman reveals this entire universe of mind and matter (53). ...

The Atman is pure consciousness, clearly manifest as underlying the states of waking, dreaming and dreamless sleep. It is inwardly experienced as unbroken consciousness, the consciousness that I am I. It is the unchanging witness that experiences the ego, the intellect and the rest, with their various forms and changes (68).

Swamiji discerned:

It is through the Self [Atman] that you know anything. I see the chair; but to see the chair, I have first to perceive myself and then the chair. It is in and through the Self that the chair is perceived. It is in and through the Self that you are known to me, that the whole world is known to me; and therefore to say this Self is unknown is sheer nonsense. Take off the Self and the whole universe vanishes. ...

This Impersonal God requires no demonstrations, no proofs. He is nearer to us than even our senses, nearer to us than our own thoughts; it is in and through Him that we see and think. To see anything, I must first see Him. To see this wall I first see Him, and then the wall, for He is the eternal subject.²

Concerning the immanence of God, Swamiji had these ideas:

He is the Witness, the eternal Witness of all knowledge. Whatever we know we have to know in and through Him. He is the Essence of our own Self. He is the Essence of this ego, this I and we cannot know anything excepting in and through that I. Therefore you have to know everything in and through the Brahman (2.133). ...

He whom all the Vedas worship, nay, more, He who is always present in the eternal "I", He existing, the whole universe exists. He is the light and life of the universe. If the "I" were not in you, you would not see the sun, everything would be a dark mass. He shining, you see the world (2.321-2). ...

The light of the spirit—moves and speaks and does everything [through our bodies, minds, and the like]. It is the energy and soul and life of the spirit that is being worked upon in different ways by matter ... The spirit is the cause of all our thoughts and body-action and everything, but it is untouched by good or evil, pleasure or pain, heat or cold, and all the dualism of nature, although it lends its light to everything (1.471). ...

First, here is the body, second, the mind, or instrument of thought, and third behind this

mind is the Self of man. The Sanskrit word is Atman. ... The Self is the illuminator, and the mind is the instrument in Its hands, and through that instrument It gets hold of the external instrument, and thus comes perception. ... Indriyas, and they carry sensations to the mind, and the mind presents them further back to another state of the mind, which in Sanskrit is called Chitta, and there they are organised into will, and all these present them to the King of kings inside, the Ruler on His throne, the Self of man. He then sees and gives His orders. Then the mind immediately acts on the organs, and the organs on the external body. The real Perceiver, the real Ruler, the Governor, the Creator, the Manipulator of all this is the Self of man (2.233). ...

The intellect must carry it [the sensation] forward and present the whole thing before the ruler in the body, the human soul, the king on the throne. Before him this is presented, and then from him comes the order, what to do or what not to do; and the order goes down in the





Vincenzo Gioberti

same sequence to the intellect, to the mind, to the organs, and the organs convey it to the instruments, and the perception is complete (2.214).

The Italian philosopher Vincenzo Gioberti (1801–52) taught the idea of ontology that human reason first grasps the infinite being

containing within It all determinations, even though they cannot be distinguished by earthly knowledge. This being [*essere* also called *ente* by Gioberti, 'that which is'] is perpetually present to the human mind, and it is only in the light of this being that existing things are known, which remain on the level of sensation as they impinge on experience. Knowledge is a philosophical reflection on the relationship present in the mind between existing things and this being, by virtue of which they exist. They are not part of it, as in Pantheism, but they are created by it. ... infinite being, God, is the first and intuitively grasped object of thought, with all other things only known in the light of this intuition.³

Catholics rejected this idea because it does not explain how a person continually grasps God yet remains unenlightened. How does this experience of God differ from the beatific vision, samadhi?

The Unity of Apperception and a Sense of Personal Identity:

Acharya Shankara taught that there must be something that underlies human thought, a reality that pervades the flow of consciousness, by which the events of consciousness can be fixed. As the permanent synthesising subject, Brahman is the root cause of all knowledge. It is the knower that pervades the changing cognitive empirical self. Being the foundational unitary consciousness and first cause, it organises the manifold ideas and scattered data of perception within the human mind, synthesising them into a meaningful and coherent unity. This process is necessary for the awareness of personal identity and for making memory and inference possible. 'Unless there exists one continuous principle equally connected with the past, the present, and the future, or an absolutely unchangeable Self which cognizes everything, we are unable to account for remembrance, recognition, and so on.'⁴

Swamiji explains the role of the Atman in unifying our thought:

Similar is the case with the sensations which these organs of ours are carrying inside and presenting to the mind, and which the mind in its turn is presenting to the intellect. This process will not be complete unless there is something permanent in the background upon which the picture, as it were, may be formed, upon which we may unify all the different impressions. What is it that gives unity to the changing whole of our being? What is it that keeps up the identity of the moving thing moment after moment? What is it upon which all our different impressions are pieced together, upon which the perceptions, as it were, come together, reside, and form a united whole? We have found that to serve this end there must be something, and we also see that that something must be, relatively to the body and mind, motionless. The sheet of cloth upon which the camera throws the picture is, relatively to the rays of

light, motionless, else there will be no picture. That is to say, the perceiver must be an individual. This something upon which the mind is painting all these pictures, this something upon which our sensations, carried by the mind and intellect, are placed and grouped and formed into a unity, is what is called the soul of man.⁵ ...

Where is that unity which we call the Atman? The idea is this, that in spite of this continuous change in the body, and in spite of this continuous change in the mind, there is in us something that is unchangeable, which makes our ideas of things appear unchangeable. When rays of light coming from different quarters fall upon a screen, or a wall, or upon something that is not changeable, then and then alone it is possible for them to form a unity, then and then alone it is possible for them to form one complete whole. Where is this unity in the human organs, falling upon which, as it were, the various ideas will come to unity and become one complete whole? This certainly cannot be the mind itself, seeing that it also changes. Therefore there must be something which is neither the body nor the mind, something which changes not, something permanent, upon which all our ideas, our sensations fall to form a unity and a complete whole; and this is the real soul, the Atman of man. And seeing that everything material, whether you call it fine matter, or mind, must be changeful, seeing that what you call gross matter, the external world, must also be changeful in comparison to that—this unchangeable something cannot be of material substance; therefore it is spiritual, that is to say, it is not matter—it is indestructible, unchangeable (3.404–5).

He adds:

Motion can only be perceived when there is something else which is not moving. But when two or three things are relatively moving, we first perceive the motion of the faster one, and then that of the slower ones. How is the mind to perceive? It is also in a flux. Therefore another

thing is necessary which moves more slowly, then you must get to something in which the motion is still slower, and so on, and you will find no end. Therefore logic compels you to stop somewhere. You must complete the series by knowing something which never changes (1.299; cf. 1.254–5; 2.360–1; 4.382.).

The unity of consciousness is absolutely necessary for rational coherent thought, memory, and the awareness of self-identity. Though the German thinker Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) unlike the Advaitins, did not identify this unchanging consciousness with our real Self, he did write:

If we were not conscious that what we think is the same as what we thought a moment before, all reproduction in the series of representations would be useless. ... For this unitary consciousness is what combines the manifolds successively intuited, and therefore also reproduces, into one representation. Such consciousness, however indistinct must always be present; without it, concepts, and therewith knowledge of objects, are altogether impossible.... There must therefore, be a Transcendental Ground of the unity of consciousness in the synthesis of the manifold of all our intuitions, and consequently also of the concepts of objects in general, and so of all objects of experience, a ground without which it would be impossible to think any object for our intuitions; for this object is no more than that something, the concept of which expresses such a necessity of synthesis. This original and transcendental condition is no other than Transcendental Apperception [Atman, pure unchanging consciousness] ... To render such a transcendental presupposition valid, there must be a condition which precedes all experience, and which makes experience itself possible. There can be in us no modes of knowledge, no connection or unity of one mode of knowledge with another, without that unity of consciousness which precedes all data of intuitions, and by relation to which

representation of objects is alone possible. This pure original unchangeable consciousness I shall name Transcendental Apperception. That it deserves this name is clear from the fact that even the purest objective unity, namely, that of the *a priori* concepts (space and time), is only possible through relation of the intuitions to such unity of consciousness. ... [The mind] subordinates all synthesis of apprehension (which is empirical) to a transcendental unity, thereby rendering possible their interconnection according to *a priori* rules.⁶

Kant continues: 'The "I" of apperception, and therefore the "I" in every act of thought, is one, and cannot be resolved into a plurality of subjects, and consequently signifies a logically simple subject ... But this does not mean that the thinking "I" is a simple *substance*' (B407–8).

The unity of this apperception I likewise entitle the transcendental unity of self-consciousness, in order to indicate the possibility of *a priori* knowledge arising from it. For the manifold representations, which are given in an intuition, would not be one and all *my* representations, if they did not all belong to one self-consciousness. ... The thought that the representations given in intuition one and all belong to me, is therefore equivalent to the thought that I unite them in one self-consciousness, or can at least so unite them; and although this thought is not itself the consciousness of the *synthesis* of the representations, it presupposes the possibility of that synthesis. In other words, only in so far as I can grasp the manifold of representations in one consciousness, do I call them one and all *mine*. For otherwise I should have as many-coloured and diverse a self as I have representations of which I am conscious to myself. Synthetic unity of the manifold of intuitions, as generated *a priori*, is thus the ground of the identity of apperception itself, which precedes *a priori* all *my* determinate thought. ... Now all unification of representations demands unity of consciousness in the synthesis of them. Consequently it is the

unity of consciousness that alone constitutes the relation of representations to an object, and therefore their objective validity and the fact that they are modes of knowledge; and upon it therefore rests the very possibility of the understanding (B132–4, 137).

Responsible for a Sense of Freedom:

This point was brought forth by Swamiji:

Within law is bondage; beyond law is freedom. It is also true that freedom is of the nature of the soul, it is its birthright: that real freedom of the soul shines through veils of matter in the form of the apparent freedom of man. Every moment of your life you feel that you are free. We cannot live, talk, or breathe for a moment without feeling that we are free; but, at the same time, a little thought shows us that we are like machines and not free. ... Man is really free, the real man cannot but be free. It is when he comes into the world of Maya, into name and form, that he becomes bound.⁷

That soul is free, and it is its freedom that tells you every moment that you are free. But you mistake, and mingle that freedom every moment with intelligence and mind. You try to attribute that freedom to the intelligence, and immediately find that intelligence is not free; you attribute that freedom to the body, and immediately nature tells you that you are again mistaken. That is why there is this mingled sense of freedom and bondage at the same time. The Yogi analyses both what is free and what is bound, and his ignorance vanishes. He finds that the Purusha is free, is the essence of that knowledge which, coming through the Buddhi [intellect], becomes intelligence, and, as such, is bound (1.255).

Purusha is pure consciousness, the unchanging and eternal witness.

Kant writes:

In its intelligible character (though we can only have a general concept of that character) this same subject must be considered to be free from all influence of sensibility and from all

determination through appearances. Inasmuch as it is *noumenon*, nothing *happens* in it; there can be no change requiring dynamical determination in time, and therefore no causal dependence upon appearances. And consequently, since natural necessity is to be met with only in the sensible world, this active being must in its actions be independent of, and free from all such necessity ... freedom and nature, in the full sense of these terms, can exist together, without any conflict, in the same actions, according as the actions are referred to their intelligible or to their sensible cause.⁸

In respect of the intelligible character, of which the empirical character is the sensible schema, there can be no *before* and *after*; every action irrespective of its relation in time to other appearances, is the immediate effect of the intelligible character of Pure Reason. Reason [Atman as active] therefore acts freely; it is not dynamically determined in the chain of natural causes through either outer or inner grounds antecedent in time. This freedom ought not, therefore, to be conceived only negatively [*neti-neti*] as independence of empirical conditions (A553=B581).

Provides Motivation for Self-Development and Evolutionary Development:

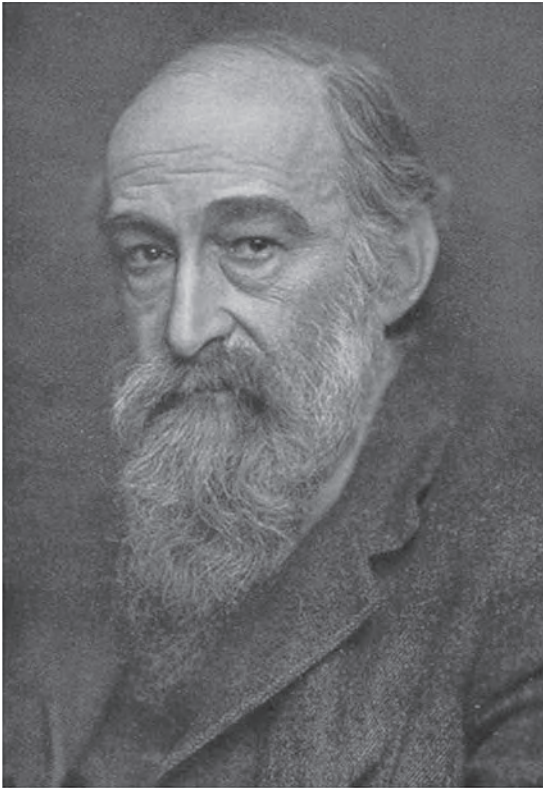
Swamiji explains that it is the internal force of the Atman that is responsible for the evolutionary process of the individual and the species:

So all progress and power are already in every man; perfection is man's nature, only it is barred in and prevented from taking its proper course. If anyone can take the bar off, in rushes nature. Then the man attains the powers which are his already. ... Today the evolution theory of the ancient Yogis will be better understood in the light of modern research. And yet the theory of the Yogis is a better explanation. The two causes of evolution advanced by the moderns, viz. sexual selection and survival of the fittest,

are inadequate. ... But the great ancient evolutionist, Patanjali, declares that the true secret of evolution is the manifestation of the perfection which is already in every being; that this perfection has been barred and the infinite tide behind is struggling to express itself. ... In the animal the man was suppressed, but as soon as the door was opened, out rushed man. So in man there is the potential god, kept in by the locks and bars of ignorance. When knowledge breaks these bars, the god becomes manifest.⁹

This 'unrealized perfection' is what Aristotle (384–22 BCE) referred to as the Final Cause, discussed at the end of this article. It is the purpose or end state of a thing that pulls an object toward a goal. Evolution is explained by reference to some end, *telos*, or purpose or good which acts as the Final Cause. It is internal, not external to the things that act. It brings about the full actualisation of the form that the object will ultimately achieve. The ultimate Final Cause is 'perfection' the goal that lies at the end of the series of evolutionary development.¹⁰

The Australian-British philosopher Samuel Alexander (1859–1938) mentions an internal creative force, *nisus* that is responsible for the evolutionary manifestation of akasha-prana. *Nisus* is similar to a concept developed earlier by Henri Bergson (1859–1941), the French Nobel Prize-winning philosopher, in his book *Creative Evolution* (1911). Bergson saw evolution as directed by an internal force. The basic source of evolution in nature is the inner *elan vital*, the vital impulse of which we are immediately aware. It is the mysterious creative agency that is the original impetus from which all life springs the source of mutations and of the directed character of evolution. Nature being a kinetic substance whose body lies in a process of ceaseless becoming, has a tendency to advance in novelty and complexity.¹¹ *Elan vital* is 'an original impetus of life' that pervades the evolutionary process. As creative, not mechanical, the vital



Samuel Alexander

impetus is a 'current of consciousness' that penetrates matter, gives rise to living bodies, and determines the course of evolution. It is the cause of new species and the evolutionary progress toward the higher complexity of structural organisation.¹²

Nirguna Brahman Reveals Itself Substantially and Conceptually

Sri Ramakrishna explains:

The vijñānis accept both God with form and the Formless, both the Personal God and the Impersonal. ... But to tell you the truth, He who is formless is also endowed with form. To His bhaktas [loving devotees of God] He reveals Himself as having a form. It is like a great ocean, an infinite expanse of water, without any trace of shore. Here and there some of the water has been frozen. Intense cold has turned it into ice. Just so, under the cooling influence, so to speak, of the bhakta's love, the Infinite appears to take

a form. Again, the ice melts when the sun rises; it becomes water as before. Just so, one who follows the path of knowledge—the path of discrimination—does not see the form of God any more. To him everything is formless. The ice melts into formless water with the rise of the Sun of Knowledge. But mark this: form and formlessness belong to one and the same Reality. ... Then one doesn't feel any more that God is a Person, nor does one see God's forms. What He is cannot be described. Who will describe Him? He who would do so disappears. He cannot find his 'I' any more.¹³

Sri Ramakrishna describes what Brahman revealed to him:

But there is another state in which God reveals to His devotee that Brahman is beyond both knowledge and ignorance. It cannot be described in words (366). ...

God has revealed to me that only the Paramatman, whom the Vedas describe as the Pure Soul, is immutable as Mount Sumeru, unattached, and beyond pain and pleasure (398). ...

I have clearly perceived all these things. It has been revealed to me that there exists an Ocean of Consciousness without limit. From It come all things of the relative plane, and in It they merge again (653). ...

Instantly I had revelation. I saw Consciousness—Indivisible Consciousness—and a divine being formed of that Consciousness (772).

Swamiji notes: 'The end of all religions is the realising of God in the soul. That is the one universal religion. If there is one universal truth in all religions, I place it here—in realising God. Ideals and methods may differ, but that is the central point.'¹⁴

Swami Prabhavananda mentioned:

Vedantists point out that, because of the presence of God within us, there exists in everyone, whether sinner or saint, the urge to attain God. But a sinner is one who is unconscious of that

urge, while a saint is one who understands that urge and consciously strives for its attainment. Now what is that urge? It is the hope to attain freedom from suffering, freedom from misery, freedom from ignorance, freedom from death. What is the sinner seeking by his sins? Happiness, freedom. In other words, he too is seeking heaven, only he is seeking it the wrong way?¹⁵

The avatars are worshipped because they are the perfect manifestations of the Atman.

In Plotinus' (c.205–70) philosophical presentation [Divine Intellect, equivalent to *saguna* Brahman, Ishvara] acquires its power from the One also called the Good [equivalent to *nirguna* Brahman]. The *Enneads* states:

We say that Intellect [Nous] is an image of that Good; for we must speak more plainly; first of all we must say that what has come into being must be in a way that Good, and retain much of It and be a likeness of It, as light is of the sun. ... Intellect, certainly, by Its own means even defines Its being for Itself by the power which comes from the One, and because Its substance is a kind of single part of what belongs to the One and comes from the One, It is strengthened by the One and made perfect in substantial existence by and from It.¹⁶

The English mystic William Law (1686–1761) apprehended:

Though God is everywhere present, yet He is only present to thee in the deepest and most central part of thy soul. ... But there is a root or depth of thee from whence all these faculties come forth, as lines from a centre, or as branches from the body of the tree. This depth is called the centre, the fund or bottom of the soul. This depth is the unity, the eternity—I had almost said the infinity—of thy soul; for it is so infinite that nothing can satisfy it or give it rest but the infinity of God.¹⁷

Sudhindra Chakravarti affirmed:

According to [Soren] Kierkegaard [1813–55] the first thing that reveals itself to me as a result of

the concentration of my inward attention is an inner conflict between the finite and the infinite in me. I cannot rest content with my finitude, for my existence inwardly yearns after the Infinite. It seeks perfection, immortality, eternity, and absolute happiness which a mere finite being cannot possess. The intense feeling of this disparity between what I am and what I should and can be, brings about a pathos or melancholy which is usually disturbed, by objective speculation and aesthetic work. The difficulty of resolving this conflict is clearly realised when all distractions and temptations are suppressed by a firm ethical determination to follow the end of existence. The end of existence is the attainment of eternal and absolute happiness. The acceptance of this absolute end demands the sacrifice of all relative and temporary goods. While directing his will absolutely to this absolute end, the exister has to choose between the relative worldly goods and the Absolute Good. *Either* the relative good *or* the Absolute good must be chosen, for there is no room for both in ethical life.¹⁸

The Cause of Love in Us

Quoting the Upanishads, Swamiji wrote:

It is not for the sake of the husband that the wife loves the husband, but for the sake of the Atman that she loves the husband, because she loves the Self. None loves the wife for the sake of the wife; but it is because one loves the Self that one loves the wife. None loves the children for the children; but because one loves the Self, therefore one loves the children. None loves wealth on account of the wealth; but because one loves the Self, therefore one loves wealth. None loves the Brahmin for the sake of the Brahmin; but because one loves the Self, one loves the Brahmin. So, none loves the Kshatriya for the sake of the Kshatriya, but because one loves the Self. Neither does any one love the world on account of the world, but because one loves the Self. None, similarly, loves the gods on account of the gods, but because one loves the Self. None loves a thing for that thing's sake;

but it is for the Self that one loves it. ... Even when the wife loves the husband, whether she knows it or not, she loves the husband for that Self. It is selfishness as it is manifested in the world, but that selfishness is really but a small part of that Self-ness. Whenever one loves, one has to love in and through the Self. This Self has to be known. What is the difference? Those that love the Self without knowing what It is, their love is selfishness. Those that love, knowing what that Self is, their love is free; they are sages. ... Every time we particularise an object, we differentiate it from the Self. I am trying to love a woman; as soon as that woman is particularised, she is separated from the Atman, and my love for her will not be eternal, but will end in grief. But as soon as I see that woman as the Atman, that love becomes perfect, and will never suffer.¹⁹

For Vedanta it is the attraction of the Atman that moves the human will towards love and for Thomas Aquinas (1225–74) the attractive power of a non-dualistic God, the universal Good, moves the human will towards goodness. Aquinas discerned:

I answer that, Just as the intellect is moved by the object and by the giver of the power of understanding, as was stated above, so the will is moved by its object, which is the good, and by Him who creates the power of willing. Now the will can be moved by any good as its object, but by God alone is it moved sufficiently and efficaciously. ... Now the potentiality of the will extends to the universal good, for its object is the universal good, just as the object of the intellect is universal being. But every created good is some particular good, and God alone is the universal Good. Therefore He alone fills the capacity of the will, and moves it sufficiently as its object. In like manner, the power of willing is caused by God alone. For to will is nothing but to be inclined towards the object of the will, which is the universal Good. But to incline towards the universal Good belongs to the first mover,

to whom the ultimate end is proportioned; just as in human affairs to him that presides over the community belongs the directing of his subjects to the common weal. Therefore in both ways it belongs to God to move the will; but especially in the second way by an interior inclination of the will. ... Thus then does God work in every agent, according to these three things. First, as an end. For since every operation is for the sake of some good, real or apparent, and since nothing is good, either really or apparently, except in so far as it participates in a likeness to the highest good, which is God, it follows that God Himself is the cause of every operation as its end.²⁰

The Background-Substratum and Substantial First Cause

For Acharya Shankara, *nirguna* Brahman is the ontological first cause, the ground of existence, which differs from the Judeo-Christian doctrine of a personal God as the cosmological and chronological first cause. Atman, which is identical with Brahman, is the substratum of existence, the underlying unitary consciousness, *chit*. 'It is the ground upon which this manifold universe, the creation of ignorance, appears to rest. It is its own support.'²¹ Brahman abides in-itself, as the foundational substrative and substantial cause of the world. As the one self-sufficient background, *ashraya*, essence from which all else proceeds, all things are rooted in Brahman while it is rooted in-itself. As the unitary consciousness, *chit*, Brahman is the knower of knowing, the seer of seeing, and the hearer of hearing. It is the pure subject that pervades all cognition and perception, revealing objects, but is itself never comprehended as an object. 'Brahman exists (1) as the Inner Self (Pratyak), (2) as the source of all activity of the senses and the like, (3) as the source whence arises our consciousness of existence with reference to all duality which is imaginary, (4) as Isvara or the Lord of the universe.'²²

Swamiji beautifully expresses the relation of Brahman to finite existence in as many ways as possible. Brahman is the background Reality, eternal subject and witness, source of all knowledge and perceptions, existence-itself, and the archetype that is reflected onto finite existence. He discerned:

The background, the reality, of everyone is that same Eternal, Ever Blessed, Ever Pure, and Ever Perfect One. It is the Atman, the Soul, in the saint and the sinner, in the happy and the miserable, in the beautiful and the ugly, in men and in animals; it is the same throughout. It is the shining One. The difference is caused by the power of expression. In some It is expressed more, in others less, but this difference of expression has no effect upon the Atman.²³ ...

He is the eternal subject of everything, the eternal witness in this universe, your own Self (2.82). ...

The light which shines through the mind is not its own. Whose is it then? It must belong to that which has it as its own essence, and as such, can never decay or die, never become stronger or weaker; it is self-luminous, it is luminosity itself. It cannot be that the soul knows, it is knowledge. It cannot be that the soul has existence, but it is existence. It cannot be that the soul is happy, it is happiness itself. That which is happy has borrowed its happiness; that which has knowledge has received its knowledge; and that which has relative existence has only a reflected existence. Wherever there are qualities these qualities have been reflected upon the substance, but the soul has not knowledge, existence, and blessedness as its qualities, they are the essence of the soul (2.216).

The Russian Semyon [Simon] Frank (1877–1950) considered Divinity [the Absolute] to be the primary ground of existence. '[Divinity] cannot be separated from the rest of reality, for Its essence consists in being the ground and the source of it.'²⁴

For it is not we who by our own activity come to possess through our cognitive gaze the primordial ground and penetrate into it. Rather, it is the primordial ground itself that possesses us, penetrates into us, and reveals itself to us in this way. ... On the other hand the primordial ground in general is not some 'something' but is precisely nothing but the primordial ground and primordial source of all, the creative, illuminating, and grounding potency of all. ... The primordial ground is the principle that forms *the essence of the unknowable as such*. The primordial ground is the deepest primordial mystery of reality as such: a mystery which, in spite of its unattainability, incomprehensibility, and insolvability, is nevertheless revealed with full self-evidence to the spirit that penetrates into its own depths; or rather is revealed to the spirit as self-evidence itself, as absolute *Truth* itself.²⁵

Semyon Frank





Paul Tillich

Paul Tillich (1886–1965) discerned:

Many confusions in the doctrine of God and many apologetic weaknesses could be avoided if God were understood first of all as being-itself [*Ipsum Esse*] or as the ground of being. ... As the Power of Being, God transcends every being and also the totality of beings—the world. Being-itself is beyond finitude and infinity; otherwise it would be conditioned by something other than itself, and the real power of being would lie beyond both it and that which conditioned it. Being-itself infinitely transcends every finite being. There is no proportion or gradation between the finite and the infinite. There is an absolute break, an infinite ‘jump’. On the other hand, everything finite participates in being-itself and in its infinity. Otherwise it would not have the power of being. It would be swallowed by nonbeing ... God is the cause of the entire series of causes and effects, he is the substance underlying the whole process of becoming. ... Since God is the ground of being, he is the ground of the structure of being. He

is not subject to this structure; the structure is grounded in him.²⁶

The Life-Force and Cause of Existence

The *Mandukya Upanishad* teaches: ‘He is the origin of all. He is the end of all.’²⁷ And the *Aitareya Upanishad* says: ‘Then the Self thought: “Let me send forth the worlds.” He sent forth these worlds’ (1.1.1–2; 95). According to *Chandogya Upanishad*: ‘Thou art the source of life’ (3.14.4; 103). The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* says: ‘The Self is one with Brahman, lord and creator of all’ (4.4.13; 179). The *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* says: ‘He is the creator’ (6.16; 193); and ‘Thou art creator of time’ (202). *Kaivalya Upanishad*: ‘From me all emerge, in me all exist, and to me all return. I am Brahman’ (19; 210).

Anselm (1033–1109) the Archbishop of Canterbury articulated:

Whatever is sustained [in existence] is sustained by some one thing which alone is sustained through Itself, while everything else is sustained through another. ... just as nothing was made except through the creative and present Being, so nothing is sustained except through the conserving presence of this same Being. ... where the Supreme Being does not exist, nothing exists. ... Consequently, it is clear that this Being is what sustains, excels, limits, and pervades all other things. Therefore, if these conclusions are conjoined with the ones we discovered earlier, then one and the same Being exists in and through all other things and is that from which, through which, and in which all other things exist.²⁸

According to Thomas Aquinas (1225–74), the Being, God that causes all things to exist through the act of participation must be immutable and simple. That from which all others ultimately receive their own particular limited modes of being does not simply exist but is Existence-Itself or Being-Itself (*Ipsum Esse*). He wrote:

If there were a *per se* heat, it would be the cause of all hot things, that have heat by way of participation. Now there is a being that is its own being; and this follows from the fact that there must needs be a being that is pure act and wherein there is no composition [Simple]. Hence from that one being all other beings that are not their own being, but have being by participation, must needs proceed.²⁹

The Cause of Eternal Life:

Swamiji related: 'He [Brahman] dies not. The same voice, "I am, I am", is eternal, unchangeable. In Him and through Him we know everything. In Him and through Him we see everything. In Him and through Him we sense, we think, we live, and we are.'³⁰

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888–1975) indicated that the Self 'is the subject which persists throughout the changes, the common factor in the states of waking, dream, sleep, death, rebirth and final deliverance. It is the simple truth that nothing can destroy. Death does not touch it nor vice dissolve it. Permanence, continuity, unity, eternal activity are its characteristics. It is a world self-complete. There is nothing outside of it to set against it.'³¹

From the Western standpoint Origen (c.185–254) the Middle Platonist religious philosopher explains it thus:

If then the heavenly powers receive a share of intellectual light, that is, of the Divine nature, in virtue of the fact that they share in wisdom and sanctification, and if the soul of man receives a share of the same light and wisdom, then these beings will be of one nature and one substance with each other. But the heavenly powers are incorruptible immortal; undoubtedly therefore the substance of the soul of man will also be incorruptible and immortal ... every existence which has a share in that eternal nature must itself also remain forever incorruptible and eternal.³²

The Source of Motion and Activity

Nirguna Brahman is the source of existence, consciousness, and love in the phenomenal world. But since they are immutable, how can they produce change? A partial explanation follows.

Acharya Shankara pointed out, 'A magnet, though possessing no tendency to act by itself, still induces that tendency in iron; or objects of perception like color etc., which by themselves have no tendency to act, still impart this to the eye etc. Similarly, it is but logical that God who is all-pervasive, the Self [Atman] of all, omniscient, and omnipotent, should be the impeller of all even though He is Himself free from any tendency to act.'³³

Sankhya philosophers and their Vedanta commentators like Vijnanabhikshu, flourished during 1550–75, taught the following as explained by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. Purusha, the transcendental Self, is the primal unmoved Mover, which dwells outside of the natural world.

The first cause as well as the final cause, of the cosmic process is Purusha. But the causation of Purusha is purely mechanical, being due not to its volition but to its mere proximity. Purusha moves the world by a kind of action which is not movement. It is compared to the attraction of a magnet [Purusha] for iron [the world]. ... God, the first mover, is said to move the world by being the object after which the whole creation strives, and not as if it were in any way determined by his action. Concern with the affairs of the world would destroy the completeness of God's life. So God, who is pure intelligence, though himself unmoved, moves the world by his mere being. The further development of things arises from their own nature.³⁴

The Immutable purusha is not affected by the events that occur in the world. As the foundation of teleology, all desires and movements that take place in the world are unconsciously and unwittingly motivated by a striving for purusha, the final cause of all events.

A more detailed exposition is given by Aristotle concerning the Unmoved Mover, which is both the First Cause and Final Cause of the universe and its activities. For Aristotle,³⁵ there must be an Unmoved Mover in order to explain the motion of entities. Time is eternal and since 'time is the number [measure] of motion', the latter must also be eternal. Motion is not self-caused and thus cannot begin without the prior existence of something already in motion.

Aristotle concludes that there must be something that imparts motion without itself being moved; otherwise, there would be an infinite regress of movers, the moved and instruments of moving, which is unacceptable. ... all movable things are only potentially in motion, and require something else to act upon them in order to be set in motion. ... since motion is both eternal and necessary, the first mover must be equally eternal and necessary. ... there is only *one* unmoved mover, not only because many unmoved movers are unnecessary, but because only one mover could produce a continuous motion, in the sense of being an interconnected system of causes and effects. Moreover, since it is continuous, motion is one; one effect requires a single cause, so that the unmoved mover must also be one. He concludes that an unmoved mover causing eternal motion must likewise be eternal.³⁶

In *Metaphysics*, Aristotle concludes according to the commentator:

Since that which moves and is moved is intermediate, there is something which moves without being moved, being eternal, substance, and actuality. The first mover is an eternal, fully actual substance that moves the first heaven without itself being moved, either self-moved or moved by something else. Being unmovable, it is fully actual, because, otherwise, it would have potentiality [to change] and therefore not be unmovable. ... The unmoved mover as final cause causes motion by being loved [desired] ...

God could not impart motion as the first efficient cause, because to do so God would have to be in motion, and if God were in motion, then God would be moved and movable ... the first heaven has intelligence, or soul, in order to love the unmoved mover and so allow the latter to function as final cause. ... Its necessity consists in the fact that it cannot be otherwise but can exist only in a single way; in other words, its necessity is a result of its lacking all potentiality [for change]. The first mover is also a first principle (*archê*), for the first mover explains everything else because it causes all motion.³⁷

Aristotle writes that there is a substance 'which is eternal and unmovable and separate from sensible things'.³⁸

It has been shown also that this substance cannot have any magnitude, but is without parts, and indivisible for it produces movement through infinite time, but nothing finite has infinite power; and, while every magnitude is either infinite or finite, it cannot, for the above reason, have finite magnitude, and it cannot have infinite magnitude because there is no infinite magnitude at all.



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Aristotle



BALABODHA

Ancient Wisdom Made Easy

Mantra

MANTRA IS A COMMONLY used Sanskrit word, not just by people who take to some kind of spiritual practices, but this word is used in a broader sense to mean any statement or slogan. Just the immense popularity of the word makes it very important to know its meaning. This is a Sanskrit word. Sanskrit is a classical language like Greek, Latin, and Persian. And in Sanskrit, as in most classical languages, most words are derived from a stem or root.

The word 'mantra' has been derived from the root word *man*, which means to think, believe, imagine, suppose, conjecture, regard, consider, remember, meditate, learn, understand, comprehend, or know. To the root *man* has been added the suffix *tra*, which has the primary meaning of 'the means of doing something'. So, added to *man*, the suffix *tra* would result in the word *mantra* that denotes the means of doing anything that is meant by the word *man*.

The word 'mantra' has been mainly used in connection with spiritual or religious disciplines. Mantras can be prayers or invocations and can be used for worship. Mantras are known to have a therapeutic value. Almost all Eastern religious or faith traditions have some mantras and forms of meditation or chanting of mantras. Some mantras are chanted orally or mentally and are believed to bring peace and fulfilment and also liberation or moksha. Mantras also mean various kinds of incantations that have different aims to fulfil like bringing wealth, wisdom, progeny, rainfall, and killing of enemies. Many Vedic,

Buddhist, and tantric texts are known to have mantras that have various secular goals.

Though mantras are verbal texts or even could be just a single word, they are considered to have an inherent power that can be brought out only by the repetition by a person, who is pure mentally and physically, and has led a life of strict moral and spiritual discipline. If not repeated with proper discipline, some mantras have been known to cause harm to the person chanting the mantra.

A mantra can be seen as a means to achieve, understand, or perceive something that cannot be perceived by the five senses. It also brings clarity to what can be perceived by the senses, enables one to infer the whole, where only a part can be seen, and dispels all doubts regarding the proper perception of a thing. In most religious or faith traditions, the spiritual life does not even begin unless the aspirant is initiated into the practice of the chanting of a mantra. The mantra acts a seed of spirituality that grows into a full-fledged tree of spiritual discipline and purity, finally taking one beyond the mind. Sometimes, it might be difficult to find logic or reason in a mantra and also in the practice of chanting or repeating a mantra. There are various branches of Eastern philosophy that study mantras in depth.

In the present-day, the word 'mantra' has been used to denote some theories, statements, or slogans, like in the term 'management mantra'. However, the widely prevalent meaning of the word continues to be philosophical, religious, and spiritual.



TRADITIONAL TALES

Eight Days

EKNATH WAS one of the many great saints who lived in Maharashtra. A person, who had heard of Saint Eknath, went to meet him. He was amazed at the sweetness and simplicity of Eknath's life. On his face shone divine wisdom. That showed that his life was free from troubles and confusions.

Hence, the visitor asked Eknath: 'O Lord, I can see the silence and beauty filling your life. I am clueless as to how you can live a life without any disturbance in this world, just like a clear stream of water. Your life is the embodiment of simplicity and purity. But, worldly people like me are constantly disturbed and distracted by hundreds of trials and tribulations. There is a huge chasm between your silent life and the lives of householders like me that are filled with quakes and hurricanes. This chasm is like the one between a tall mountain and a lowly pasture. Your mind does not seem to be affected by any worry. But, we are constantly consumed and devoured by all kinds of evil forces like confusion, enmity, hatred, and egotism. Is it possible for us to live a life full of peace like you? I want to live like you. I humbly request you to show me the path to do so.'

Listening intently to the visitor, Eknath replied: 'Child! Leave aside all that you are thinking now. I have to tell you a very important thing immediately. You are about to die. You will die after eight days.'

Eknath's reply shocked the visitor. The idea that he had approached death overpowered his mind, and because of this, his mental outlook underwent a huge transformation.



Saint Eknath (1533–99)

Without saying a word more, he took leave of Saint Eknath. 'Oh my God! I have just eight days to live! I am going to die after eight days.' Muttering these words to himself, that person reached his home.

He called his wife and said to her: 'O dear! I have tortured you in many ways. I seek your forgiveness for those crimes for which I am repenting now. My life would end in just eight days. I seek your pardon for all the hurtful things that I have said to you and for causing you pain, and for giving you all the other sufferings. Please forgive me forgetting my mistakes.'

He went to his neighbours, friends, relatives, and all other people he knew and informed them about his imminent death. He approached all with whom he had quarrelled and said to them: 'Dear friend, I cannot express my sorrow when I think of the horrible manner in which I have behaved with you. I am about to die in just eight days. The Lord of death has marked me. In eight days this life of mine would have come to an end. Please forgive me for having quarrelled with you.' Thus, he sought forgiveness from all.

In this manner, he went to all who had been affected by his actions and those with whom he had cultivated enmity and expressed his sorrow for his wrongful actions and sought their forgiveness, informing them about his nearing death.

The eighth day arrived. Saint Eknath went to his house. Seeing the Saint, that person prostrated before him and asked: 'O Lord, has the moment of my death arrived?' Eknath replied: 'The truth about that is known to God alone. However, I need to know something. Please tell me how you spent these eight days. How many people did you scold? With how many people did you quarrel? How many people did you hurt? How many people did you insult?'

That person replied: 'O Lord, all these eight days, it was death alone that was dangling before my eyes. How can I quarrel or scold someone in this state of mind? Where did I have time for that? I was reaching out to all with whom I had quarrelled and was seeking their forgiveness. I had time only for that. From the moment I met you and talked to you until today I have spent my time fruitfully, without quarrelling with anyone.'

At this, Eknath said: 'Child! Look at this wonder. You had been thinking of death alone last eight days. I can understand that because of this you have lived these eight days in a very good way and also in a way beneficial to others. Do you know what the state of people like me is? We

live every moment of our lives constantly thinking of death. That is why we can live peacefully.

'Can you tell me how long we would live in this body? Even if nothing else is certain in our lives, it is certain that sooner or later this body of ours is going to be destroyed and become one with the earth. Therefore, we should not be attached to this destructible body but should live our lives devoted to the indestructible God.

'We should always show our love to others and not quarrel with them. Righteousness should reflect in our speech, action, and thought. One should not talk in a manner hurtful to others. One should serve others without any selfish interest, with sweet words, and without hurting anyone with one's speech, action, and thought. We should offer what we have, to others without a frown but with a smile.

'Think about it. The talents that we have, the possessions that we have, do not belong to us but belong to God alone. We should offer them to others with all our hearts, knowing full well that God has given to us what belongs to God so that we may be fit instruments in ensuring that they reach many people. Since God has given to us what belongs to God, we have no right to keep a part of them for ourselves and deny God's children who come to us with their wants. How can it be right to deny God's things to God's children? How can it be righteous to hate and not love God's children but love God?

'We should use this destructible body in actions beneficial to others. This body is for the welfare of others. How great would it be to be of some use to a few, who want to attain God before our body vanishes just like a streak of lightning! Being able to be of even a little help to even a few before this bubble of a body vanishes is a great thing indeed. The day we were born our death was made certain. Before death arrives, living a life of service to others would indeed make life meaningful.'



REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



Vivekananda and Others

Tapash Sankar Dutta

Tapash Sankar Dutta, Premtola, Silchar, Assam 788004. 2014. ₹100. 292 pp. PB.

As it is mentioned in the preface of this book, it is divided into two parts. The first part is a compilation of some articles in English and the second part is a compilation of articles in Bengali, on assorted topics and people. This is a unique book in the sense that it is bilingual, and hence the reader should be well versed in both the languages.

This book does not touch on any one specific topic; it is a collection of various stories, topics, incidents, and research writings. The reader needs to be aware of this fact beforehand or else there is a chance of disappointment as the reader dives deeper into the book.

This book is not targeted towards any specific audience; it can be a read for anybody and everybody who loves reading. Most of the articles are on Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda. Other articles are on—well, everything else—ranging from religion, spirituality, and education system to the Indian freedom struggle, to name a few.

The writing is crisp and clear and the book presents the collected information in a matter-of-fact way. The first part contains many repetitions, which might irritate the reader. While the topics themselves are not anything outrageous, the variety of the topics is overwhelming. It feels like the writer may have set an expectation by using the word 'others' in the title, to which the book does not do justice.

All in all, this is a one-time read book, if anybody cares for a book to learn something about Swamiji and much else.

Papiya Debnath
Pune



Swami Vivekananda on Indian Reconstruction: In the light of Nationalistic, Social and Spiritual Aspects

Dr N Lekshmikutty

Malabar Institute for Research and Development, Old Bus Stand, Vatakara, Calicut, Kerala 673101. Email: kknkurupchs@gmail.com. 2009. ₹300. ix + 262 pp. PB.

The book under review is a well-researched thesis on Swami Vivekananda's original contribution to the resurgence of India as a spiritually evolved, economically vibrant, and socially progressive nation after a long spell of its enslavement by the Moghuls and the British. In the galaxy of social reformers and patriots, including Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and the like, Swamiji shines as a stalwart with a difference, uniquely brimming with creative, imaginative, and original ideas and plans for India's swift rise as an awakened and independent nation from out of the quagmire of stupor and slavery in which it found itself buried by accidents of history. The author insightfully identifies Swamiji's robust sense of spirituality and ascetic self-sacrifice as the fountainhead from which all his other virtues like passion for freedom, patriotism, altruism, humanism, egalitarianism, liberalism, and universalism spring forth. With the unerring vision of nonduality, Swamiji read the Upanishadic truth of '*tat tvam asi*, you are that' in the popular idiom 'jiva is Shiva', which Sri Ramakrishna muttered in one of his highest spiritual moods. In a profound sense, it was this Magna Carta, pronounced intuitively by Sri Ramakrishna, which became the perennial source of Swamiji's constructive ideas and creative projects.

The popular version of Advaitic truth which Sri Ramakrishna vouchsafed to Swamiji in a flash of

intuition gave Swamiji a brilliant clue to forge, out of the mystic formula, a pragmatic plan of Practical Vedanta. It is to the eternal credit of Swamiji that he pulled the sublime gospel of Vedanta down from the ivory tower of pedagogic debate and discussion, into the lowly hearth and home and the noisy marketplace to improve the lives of the downtrodden and the depressed. Swamiji crafted, out of the mystic science of Vedanta, a powerful technology of sacrifice and service that revolutionised the general approach to various social, religious, and educational schemes. The author points out how Swamiji reinterpreted the core of asceticism as more a spontaneous love of beings and passion for service and sacrifice than cold aloofness and rigorous spiritual practices for personal salvation. Sannyasins should, during times of trials and tribulations of humanity, rush out to wipe the tears, heal the wounds, console the broken-hearted, and extend a helping hand. A genuine spiritual person is one who rises to combat social atrocities like untouchability and unapproachability, unjust inequalities, gender injustice, persecution of the lower classes, bar to the education of women and the poor masses, and denial of access to the masses of scriptural lore. Swamiji wanted neither eclecticism nor syncretism but wholeheartedly opted for all-inclusivism through the strategy of a sagacious synthesis. He was a strong advocate of the fusion of Occidental science and technology and Oriental values of spirituality. He made an earnest plea for the reinterpretation and reorientation of India's ancient values and social institutions, to make them responsive to the needs and challenges of the modern technological age.

Swamiji's unitive experience and vision of equanimity constituted the sheet anchor of his approach to the myriad problems plaguing humanity. His plea for not just tolerance but acceptance of other faiths; his stress on the need for religious harmony; his censure of the very idea of religious conversion; his faith in humankind; his stout defence of idol-worship as a lower rung to climb up the ladder for attaining the experience of the *nirguna* Brahman; his championing of the cause of women, youth, and the poor masses; his progressive views on women's education; his advocacy of 'man-making and character-building education'; his praise of Sanskrit as

the repository of Indian culture and his advocacy of the restoration of the legitimate status of Sanskrit; his urge to rightly blend the secular and the spiritual, reason and faith, mysticism and logic, and science and spirituality; his defence of the caste system sans its venomous aspects; his prophecy of the advent of the Shudra Raj as the logical happening in the sequential succession of the four castes as claimants to power and governance; his flair for going to the root of any problem and coming out with infallible remedies; his insistence on inculcating the spirit of self-help in the downtrodden; his innate nature of seeing divinity in all beings; his enlightened policy of 'self-glorification abroad and self-examination at home'; and many more of Swamiji's original thought-currents are cogently recorded by the author in the informative book consisting of eight chapters replete with memorable quotations titled: 'Introduction and Background Study', 'The Indian Awakening', 'Vivekananda's Concept of Emerging India', 'Ideology and Transformation', 'Education and National Reconstruction', 'Dream of an Egalitarian Society', 'The Ramakrishna Mission and Kerala', and 'In Retrospect'. The seventh chapter sketches the history of the development of the Ramakrishna Mission in Kerala. The book has, at its end, a select bibliography, a glossary, an appendix, and an exhaustive index; and at the end of each chapter, there is a section titled 'Notes and References'.

Swamiji is a divine response to the grim challenges of a sceptical world. He is an inscrutable monk who has his rendezvous with the divine each and every moment in his life in such varied situations as visits with the poor in squalid slums, the sick and the aged in their sanctuaries, the deserted and the wronged women in their shelters; intellectual interactions with the scholarly; and a relaxed tête-à-tête with the super-rich in opulent mansions. His divine life is a commentary on the motto, '*Atmano mokshartham jagat hitaya cha*, for the salvation of the individual self and for the well-being of all on earth'. The learned author has immortalised Swamiji in the inspiring pages of her deeply-researched book. The book should interest all, particularly the present-day youth, who are in desperate need for an inspiring example to emulate.

N Hariharan
Madurai

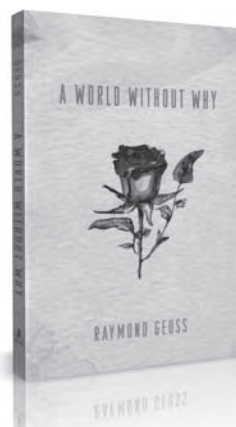
MANANA

**Exploring thought-currents from around the world.
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A World Without Why

Raymond Geuss

Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540. USA. 2014. xvi + 264 pp. \$24.95. PB. ISBN 9780691169200.



IT IS NATURAL FOR US to think that humans as animals belong to a certain biological species and are, as such, subject to a number of natural necessities such as the vital need to maintain a certain minimal body temperature and to eat and drink if they are to survive. We are, however, not merely biological entities but also inherently social animals, and societies, too will ‘need’ to satisfy certain conditions if they are to survive. In societies that do survive there will be a variety of mechanisms for imposing ‘necessities’ on individuals and smaller groups; often these mechanisms will function under the guise of simply transmitting or ‘passing on’ natural necessities. Thus, I *must* eat if I am to survive, *so* we *must* all work cooperatively for several hours a day in the fields or rice paddies if we are to survive. This transmission, however, is never a mere process of neutral ‘passing on’ necessity. Actual human ‘needs’ of any kind are never presented to us, as it were, ‘raw’ but always in one social configuration or other, so any discussion of basic biological needs is perforce a kind of retrospective abstraction, which might be warranted, but, if it is, is always warranted for some specific purpose. In fact, what is called ‘transmission’ is always a process of the transformation or social constitution of needs. ‘Transformation *or* constitution’ is not a mistaken or incautious formulation, as if I couldn’t make up my mind whether

there was something, some ‘need’, there to start with that was ‘transformed’ into a slightly different need or whether ‘needs’ did not ‘really’ exist until socially processed. Rather it is an expression of my view—which, of course, could be incorrect but is not inconsidered—that this alternative is not to be taken as an absolute but is context-dependent. ‘We all need to work together cooperatively in order to survive’ is deeply ambiguous, and this ambiguity is a breeding ground for ideological distortion. It can mean:

- a. ‘if we don’t all work together cooperatively, each of us will die very soon (because the small boat we’re in is leaking badly)’
- b. ‘if we don’t all work together cooperatively, not all of us will survive (although some may)’
- c. ‘if we don’t all work together cooperatively, we don’t survive *as a recognizable group* (although each individual may disperse and survive alone or as a member of a different group)’

In addition to these strict ‘needs’, that is, conditions that must be fulfilled if survival is to be ensured, humans also have an individually and socially idiosyncratic set of desires, preferences, wishes, and aspirations. We all need to eat and drink, but I prefer tea to coffee, although many people have the reverse preference. I also recognise that there are, or at any rate have been, individuals and even whole societies, such as that of ancient Rome, in which neither tea nor coffee

is drunk at all. We also all grow up and remain throughout our entire lives enmeshed in a thick web of what are now called 'normative' demands that have their origin ultimately in institutions that claim 'authority' over us. In many Western European societies fathers of families were for a long time construed as 'heads of the household' and had significant real and moral powers over their wives, children, and servants; political authorities of various kinds demanded allegiance; churches (or The Church) claimed to preach the word of god and had institutions like courts to enforce their views; relations of economic dependence among the members of small groups gave the words of those in key positions special weight; local forms of social pressure (and of solidarity) could take sharply articulated forms. Finally, as social beings we humans are to some extent capable of perceiving and acquiring knowledge about the real world in which we live, and we have some extremely feeble, only intermittently effective, and highly variable ratiocinative capacities. Human life is to a large extent constituted by an attempt to reconcile 'needs', desires, and 'normative claims' on an individual and social level in view of our best knowledge about our world.

Questions about how individuals and groups should behave can arise in my social form, but it can seem to us from the vantage point of the apparently infinite distance that separates twenty-first-century Europeans from 'traditional' societies that in those societies individuals may be perplexed and different groups (and duties to different groups) may conflict, but the question of the *general* structure of an individual human life and of social life as a whole will not seem to be particularly problematic. Since, however, the sources of such normative claims will be diverse, it can easily happen that they seem to make *different* demands on agents even in traditional

societies. Equally individuals' perceptions, beliefs, and preferences will be different.

It is natural for thinking people in the West to start by assuming that the world is (finally) 'in order' and trying to formulate explicitly and then 'reconcile' the various claims made by the different authorities: The Gospel accounts of Mark and John *can* be made to tally. The emperor, the pope, and the local lord '*really*' are demanding us to lead the *same* kind of life. St Paul *can* be rendered consistent with Aristotle. In a world *with* relatively intact and generally recognised authorities, the question of discipline, both of how and to what extent one should or may coerce others, and of self-discipline seems in principle answerable: One disciplines people by training them, as much as possible, to want to do what they in case 'must' (of natural necessity) do and also what they should do. To what extent it will be possible to make people want to do what they must and should do will depend on a number of unpredictable factors, among them the nature of the demands society makes and the kind of forces of coercion, manipulation, and education it has available to it.

What happens, however, if the questions go beyond queries about reconciling occasional discrepancies between individual authoritative statements? What if the emperor is a sinner and schismatic? What if the *pope* is a heretic? What if the very idea of 'being a heretic' comes to look archaic and irrelevant? What could proper discipline (including self-discipline) look like in a world like that?

So is the world, including our authorities, fundamentally in order, or is it not? What would we mean by either of these two statements? How could we argue for one or the other of them? What, if anything, would follow for our lives if one or the other of these statements were true and could be shown to be true?



REPORTS

New Math Centre

Ramakrishna Math (Shyampukur Bati), Kolkata, till recently a sub-centre of Ramakrishna Math (Balaram Mandir), has been made a full-fledged branch centre of Ramakrishna Math, Belur. Its address is 'Ramakrishna Math (Shyampukur Bati), 55A, Shyampukur Street, Kolkata 700004', phone: (033) 25558580, and email: <shyampukurbati@rkmm.org>. Further, Ramakrishna Math (Kathamrita Bhavan), Kolkata, which was till now directly under the Headquarters, has been made a sub-centre of Shyampukur Bati.

Celebration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sister Nivedita

The following centres held various programmes to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Sister Nivedita. **India: Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata**: A youths' convention on 12 November 2017 attended by about 250 people. **Allahabad**: A meeting on 28 October attended by 150 students. **Chandigarh**: A quiz competition on 28 October in which about 1,800 students from 16 schools participated. **Chandipur**: A students' convention on 28 October attended by 233 students from 20 schools. **Chennai Sarada Vidyalyaya**: A teachers' convention on 28 October attended by 450 teachers. **Coimbatore Math**: A seminar on 'Sister Nivedita—Significance of Service' on 3 November in which about 400 nursing students and 100 devotees took part. **Indore**: A public meeting on 19 November attended by about 350 devotees. **Itanagar**: A public meeting on 28 October attended by nearly 100 people. **Jaipur**: A spiritual retreat on 12 November attended by about 100 devotees. **Jalpaiguri** (in association with **Kankurgachhi Math**): Lecture programmes at a women's college and a government office in Jalpaiguri on 16 and

23 November which were attended by nearly 250 people in all. **Jhargram**: A spiritual retreat on 4 November attended by about 700 people. **Kadapa**: Two youths' conventions on 16 and 17 November, which were attended by about 600 men and 800 women respectively. **Kankurgachhi**: A meeting on 14 November attended by about 1,000 students. **Madurai**: A students' convention on 25 November attended by 115 students. **Manasdwip**: A meeting on 28 October in which students of the three schools of the centre took part. Further, at the initiative of the centre, 32 schools in Sagar Island held various programmes on the same day. **Nagpur**: A students' convention on 3 November which was attended by nearly 300 students. **Port Blair**: A youths' convention on 19 November and a spiritual retreat on 26 November which were attended by 270 people in total. **Purulia** (in association with **Bagda Math**): Cultural competitions from July to October in which about 11,000 students from 165 schools and 9 colleges participated. Prizes were distributed to the winners in a programme held on 28 October which was attended by 600 students. A national seminar on Sister Nivedita on 12 September in which 140 people took part. **Salem**: Programmes comprising talks, video shows, and question-answer sessions for students at five schools in Salem from 18 September to 20 November, which were attended altogether by 1,333 students. **Sargachhi**: A procession, speeches, and a quiz competition on 28 October in which about 800 people took part. **Swamiji's Ancestral House**: A lecture at the centre on 8 November, which was attended by about 500 people, and eight lectures in and around Kolkata from 23 October to 18 November attended altogether by 3,550 people. **Vadodara**: A state-level youth convention on 11 November

in which 250 youths took part. **Vijayawada:** Cultural competitions in which nearly 11,600 students from 166 schools in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states took part. Prizes were distributed to the winners in a programme held on 12 November. **Vrindaban:** A youths' convention on 22 November attended by about 200 people. **Chicago, USA:** Public meetings at the University of Chicago and at a public hall in Chicago on 28 and 29 October, which were attended altogether by about 400 people. **Singapore:** A concert on 5 November in which Sister Nivedita's life story was depicted in the style of Tamil folk songs using traditional instruments.

News of Branch Centres

As part of its yearlong diamond jubilee celebration, **Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Purulia** held a special programme on 17 October consisting of speeches and cultural events, in which about 100 monks participated. The centre also held a youths' convention, a teachers' convention, a parents' convention, and an alumni meet from 15 to 19 November. In all, the programmes were attended by about 2,000 people.

The first floor of the dispensary building at **Ramakrishna Math, Cooch Behar** was inaugurated on 12 November.

Gandura Oraon, a former student of Divyayan Krishi Vigyan Kendra of **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Ranchi Morabadi**, engaged in agricultural activities at Village Gurgurjari of Mandar Block, Ranchi District, adopted by the Ashrama to make it a model village, was awarded 'Jharkhand Samman' for his efforts in encouraging other farmers to adopt new agricultural technologies. The award consisting of a citation, a memento, and one lakh rupees was handed over to him by Sri Raghubar Das, Chief Minister of Jharkhand, in a function held at Ranchi on 15 November.

Two class-nine students of **Ramakrishna**

Mission Vidyapith, Deoghar secured the first and second positions at the state-level science seminar contest held at Ranchi by Birla Industrial and Technological Museum, Kolkata, on 1 November.

Relief

Winter Relief: The following centres distributed blankets and various winter garments, shown against their names, to needy people:

India: **Aalo:** 59 blankets on 26 December 2017. **Agartala:** 300 blankets on 16 and 17 December. **Asansol:** 375 blankets from 12 November to 17 December. **Baghbazar:** 455 sweaters and 1,723 blankets on 16 and 17 December. **Bamunmura:** 505 blankets from 1 to 26 November. **Barasat:** 315 blankets from 3 to 26 December. **Barisha:** 300 blankets on 19 December. **Bhubaneswar:** 500 blankets from 5 November to 16 December. **Cooch Behar:** 150 blankets on 9 December. **Gurap:** 160 blankets on 6 and 16 December. **Hatamuniguda:** 300 blankets on 8 December. **Jalpaiguri:** 1,485 blankets from 22 November to 27 December. **Jayrambati:** 1,529 jackets, 782 sweatshirts, and 809 sweaters from 7 to 20 November. **Jhargram:** 125 blankets on 9 December. **Karimganj:** 800 blankets from 10 May to 24 December. **Kathamrita Bhavan:** 300 blankets on 13 and 14 December. **Katihar:** 400 blankets on 12 and 29 November. **Kothar:** 500 blankets on 5 December. **Muzaffarpur:** 300 blankets from 9 to 29 December. **Narottam Nagar:** 345 jackets on 26 and 27 December. **Rahara:** 920 blankets on 14 December. **Ramharipur:** 300 blankets on 15 October. **Saradapitha:** 400 jackets on 19 November. **Shimla:** 100 blankets from 1 September to 5 November. **Swamiji's Ancestral House, Kolkata:** 300 blankets on 17 and 20 December. **Vrindaban:** 1,600 blankets on 9 December. **Bangladesh:** **Baliati:** 350 blankets from 15 to 26 December. **Dhaka:** 175 blankets on 19 and 20 December.

Swachchha Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Campaign)

Coimbatore Vidyalaya conducted four cleaning drives between 11 and 18 November in which the students cleaned some public places, including the premises of a school and a government office.

Sri Ramesh C Jigajinagi, Minister of State for Drinking Water and Sanitation, Government of India, launched the fourth phase of the cleanliness drive of **Mangaluru Ashrama**, *Swachchha Mangaluru*, on 3 November. The Ashrama held the following activities in November as part of the fourth phase: (i) four cleanliness drives in Mangaluru on the four Sundays, (ii) a campaign in which about 900 volunteers visited nearly 3,000 households in Mangaluru and spread awareness about cleanliness, (iii) cleanliness drives at 80 villages in Dakshina Kannada district, and (iv) cleanliness awareness programmes in 101 schools in which 10,358 students took part.

Kamarpukur centre carried out a cleanliness drive at Kamarpukur village on 26 November.

Koyilandy centre conducted a cleanliness drive on 5 November.

Synopsis of the Ramakrishna Mission Governing Body's Report for 2016–7

The 108th Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission was held at **Belur Math** on Sunday, 17 December 2017 at 3.30 p.m.

Divyayan Krishi Vigyan Kendra of **Ranchi Morabadi Ashrama** was awarded Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Rashtriya Krishi Vigyan Pratishan Puraskar at the zonal level by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi. Indian Adult Education Association, New Delhi, conferred Nehru Literacy Award, on Lokasiksha Parishad of **Narendrapur** centre for its contribution to adult literacy. Blind Boys' Academy and Braille press of **Narendrapur** centre won the National Award for the Empowerment of

Persons with Disabilities, for its comprehensive services to persons with disabilities. Bommidala Srikrishna Murthy Foundation, Guntur, presented Spoorthi Award to **Rajamahendravaram** centre in recognition of its service to society.

The 150th birth anniversaries of Swami Saradananda, Swami Akhandananda, Swami Abhedananda, Swami Subodhananda, and Sister Nivedita were celebrated in different centres through various programmes.

A branch of Ramakrishna Mission was started at **Gwalior** in Madhya Pradesh and three sub-centres were started at **Vasant Vihar, New Delhi**, **Cuttack** in Odisha, and **Bardhaman** in West Bengal. Two branch centres of Ramakrishna Math were started at **Kayamkulam** in Kerala and **Ramanathapuram** in Tamil Nadu and a sub-centre was started at **Kathamrita Bhavan, Kolkata**. Outside India, a branch centre each of Math and Mission was started at **Chandpur** in Bangladesh. **Vedanta Society of Greater Houston, USA**, was made a branch centre of Ramakrishna Math. **Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, Lusaka, Zambia**, was re-affiliated to Ramakrishna Mission.

In the **educational field**, the following new developments deserve special mention: (i) **Coimbatore Mission** centre started an e-journal entitled *Journal of Disability Management and Special Education*. (ii) The Industrial Training Centre of **Narendrapur** centre introduced three new courses.

In the **medical field**, mention may be made of the following new developments: (i) **Itanagar** centre started three new departments: Reproductive Medicine (Infertility), Urology and Renal Transplantation, and Yoga Therapy and Naturopathic Medicine. (ii) **Lucknow** centre set up seven modular operation theatres. (iii) **Seva Pratishthan** centre set up a High Dependency Unit, a step down unit of ICU, equipped with modern instruments.

In the **rural development field**, the following new projects deserve special mention: (i) **Gwalior** centre organised a workshop for 150 farmers and planted 800 trees at Sharada Balgram. (ii) **Lucknow** centre started a Village Health Centre. (iii) **Narainpur** centre built two ten-bed dwelling houses for children and 45 water reservoirs. (iv) **New Delhi** centre built 100 Twin Pit Pour Flush (TPPF) toilets. (v) **Ranchi Morabadi** centre started Livelihood and Enterprise Development Programme (LEDP) to empower 200 self-help group women as smart Agripreneurs. The centre also built 27 units of NADEP compost tanks and 57 units of raised platform for goat-rearing, and installed a solar pump for irrigation. (vi) **Sargachhi** centre started a soil-testing laboratory for farmers.

A number of centres took forward *Swachha Bharat Abhiyan* by holding various programmes, of which the following deserve special mention: (i) Students of different educational institutions of **Coimbatore Mission Vidyalaya** conducted 46 cleaning drives in which several public places were cleaned. (ii) Students of **Gwalior** centre participated in a rally and enacted a play on *Swachhata Abhiyan* which was telecast in 117 countries. (iii) **Mangaluru** centre conducted 300 cleanliness drives in which about 35,000 people participated.

Under the Ramakrishna Math, the following new projects deserve special mention: (i) **Thiruvananthapuram** centre built an operation theatre block with five operation theatres in its hospital. (ii) **Chennai Math** constructed a building for its rural development unit at Meyyur village, near Chennai. (iii) Kitchen-cum-dining-hall complex, named 'Ma Sarada Sadavrata', started to function on **Belur Math** campus. (iv) **Mysuru Ashrama** carried out cleanliness drives which covered fifty-six places in Mysuru city.

Outside India, the following new

developments deserve special mention: (i) **Dhaka (Bangladesh)** centre celebrated its centenary by holding a series of programmes and also launched *Prabodhan*, a quarterly magazine in Bengali. (ii) Statues of Swami Vivekananda were installed at **Durban, South Africa**, centre and at the **Ladysmith** sub-centre of Durban centre. (iii) The renovated Old Temple of **San Francisco, USA** centre was rededicated, and a commemorative volume was released on the occasion.

During the year, the Mission undertook welfare work by way of providing scholarships to poor students, pecuniary help to old, sick, and destitute people. Expenditure incurred: Rs. 19.67 crore.

Medical service was rendered to more than 70.69 lakh people through 10 hospitals, 78 dispensaries, 41 mobile medical units and 834 medical camps. Expenditure incurred Rs. 209.50 crore.

Nearly 2.31 lakh students studied in our educational institutions from kindergarten to university level, non-formal education centres, night schools, coaching classes, and so on. A sum of Rs. 313.33 crore was spent on the educational work.

A number of rural and tribal development projects were undertaken with a total expenditure of Rs. 68.04 crore, benefiting about 73.04 lakh people.

The Mission and Math undertook several relief and rehabilitation programmes in different parts of the country involving an expenditure of Rs. 41.08 crore, benefiting 11.65 lakh people of 5.86 lakh families.

We take this opportunity to express our heartfelt thanks to our members and friends for their kind cooperation and help.

Swami Suvirananda

17 December 2017

General Secretary



Appeal for Human Excellence

"They alone live, who live for others" — Swami Vivekananda.

Friends and Devotees,

Situated in the mystical foothills and natural greenery and beauty of the sub Himalayan range, in 1928, some inspired devotees of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda started a new Ashrama in Jalpaiguri. In 1941, the center was affiliated to the Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math 1941 as a branch centre. In addition to serving as an abode for spiritual sadhakas, this Ashrama has been engaging itself in different philanthropic activities, including a Students Home, Value Education, Integrated Child Development project, Charitable Dispensary, Library and Reading Room, Relief and Welfare Works and others.



We humbly appeal for your generous contribution towards the construction of Vivekananda Sabha Griha (depicted above), a multipurpose hall (resembling the historic Art Institute of Chicago of 1893) with the revised estimated cost about Rs.4.66 Crores, having an area of 16,000 sq. ft with a seating capacity of more than 1300 persons. It will serve as a convention hall for students, youth, and the general public, living in

the remote areas of North Bengal, to inspire human excellence, culture, philanthropy, spirituality, and most importantly national unity.

We also wish to inform that if any donor wishes to perpetuate the memory of his/her loving one, he/she may do so by contributing an appropriate amount. We would honour the donor's desire by displaying a suitable plaque to honour the deceased. Interested donors are requested to make inquiries in this regard to the Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Ashramapara, Mission Road, Jalpaiguri-735101, West Bengal, India.

Donations may be contributed either through A/C payee cheque / draft, or money order that will be thankfully accepted and acknowledged. Cheques / drafts may kindly be drawn in favour of Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Jalpaiguri.

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Please inform us immediately after online transfer, your name, full postal address, PAN No and the amount donated by email to rkmajal@gmail.com

Your contribution will go a long way in ensuring timely completion of this noble project.

May Sri Ramakrishna shower his blessings on all your endeavour is our sincere prayer.

Yours in the service of the Lord,

**Swami Shivapremananda,
Secretary**

Jalpaiguri

9th December, 2017



Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama

(A branch centre of Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math, Howrah: 711002)

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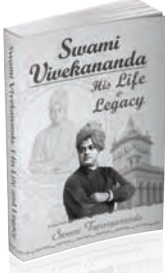
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We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonising the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran.

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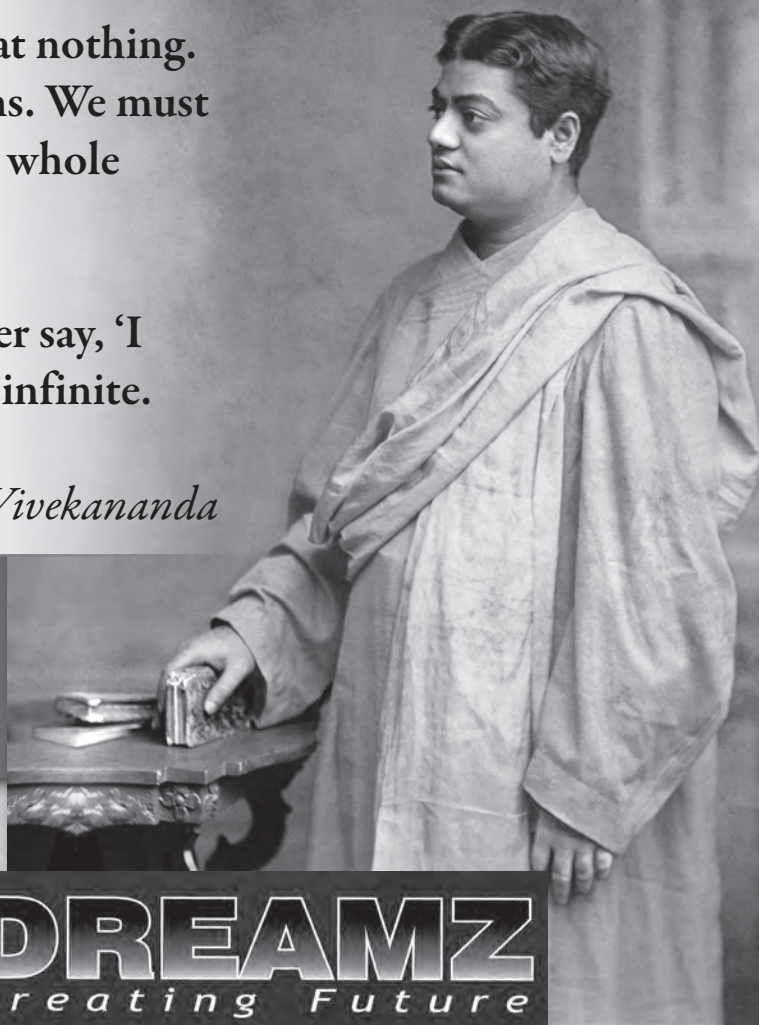
Each soul is potentially divine.
The goal is to manifest this
Divinity within.

Strength is life, weakness is
death.

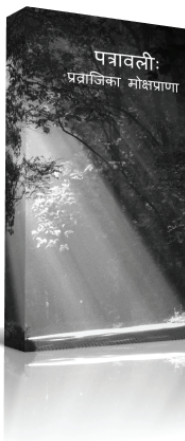
Fear nothing, stop at nothing.
You will be like lions. We must
rouse India and the whole
world.

Never say, 'No', never say, 'I
cannot', for you are infinite.

—*Swami Vivekananda*



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LETTERS OF PRAVRAJIKA MOKSHAPRANA

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